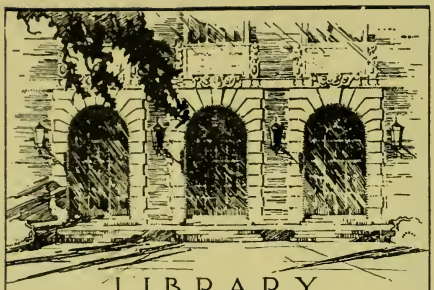

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A NOVEL

BY

SYDNEY HODGES

AUTHOR OF

'GEOFFREY'S WIFE,' 'A NEW GODIVA,' 'AMONG THE GIBJIGS,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

LONDON

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1896

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TO

THE BARONESS BURDETT-COUTTS

IN REMEMBRANCE

OF UNVARYING KINDNESS

THROUGH A FRIENDSHIP OF THIRTY YEARS

LONDON: *January* 1896

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When Leaves were Green

CHAPTER I.

IN THE SUMMER WOODS.

ELEVEN o'clock on a bright June morning. A stretch of wood on the northern slopes of the South Downs, and Glyn Beverley sketching in the midst of the wild-roses, honeysuckles, and dappled foxgloves of early summer.

A lovely spot whereon to set up an easel. A grassy knoll, bright with flowers. A wealth of leafage on three sides. On the fourth, through a gap in the foliage, a glorious view of the Downs, fading away into the blue of infinite distance.

At its highest point the wood merges into a park, where stately beeches shed acres of

shade upon the deer-trodden grass, and gather velvet lichens about their boles, and carpet the pathways with purple leaves of bygone seasons.

A morning to satisfy the most fastidious mind, and Glyn Beverley revelled in its brightness; the more so because, like most geniuses, he was discontented with his work, although it represented many days of patient labour.

'I shall only muddle it if I do more,' he said; 'and yet how utterly it fails to convey an idea of the beauty of the scene; of the richness, the superabundance of Nature which I see around! How the simplest bit of Nature's handiwork defies our best efforts! It must take its chance, however.'

He rose, and, throwing his arms above his head, gave a prolonged stretch to ease his muscles, for he had been sitting closely at his work for over three hours.

Glyn had no reason to be ashamed of his proportions. He was close on six feet in his stockings, broad-shouldered, deep-chested, fair-haired; well-featured, without being

strictly handsome. He had soft gray eyes, wherein was a world of thought and no lack of sentiment, for he was not yet five-and-twenty. He wore a beard, trimmed to within moderate bounds, whereby it became an ornament, not an obtrusive disfigurement. His suit of gray cheviot sat neatly but easily upon him, suggesting that happy medium, equally removed from the extremes of foppishness and slovenliness, which marks a man of good taste.

Glyn strode away through the wood towards the hill-top, where he contemplated painting a companion picture. The spot he had left was so secluded that he did not bestow a second thought on the unprotected state of his traps. He had been staying at the little inn called the Coach and Horses, in the neighbouring village of Harleyford, for the last three weeks, working diligently on his picture every day. In all that time he had not once been interrupted by a human footstep. But even Crusoe's domain was invaded in the end, as Glyn Beverley's was destined to be on this particular morning.

He had not been gone ten minutes, when voices broke the stillness of the spot—one as melodious as the blackbird's, the other more pronounced, but still seductive in its tone.

'Blanche, here's someone sketching,' said one.

'Then he must be a sprite, for he is invisible,' returned the other.

Upon this two ladies came through the opening in the wood and stood in the leafy amphitheatre.

'Don't stop, Laura. He may be near, and may not like his picture looked at,' said the one with the melodious voice.

'What nonsense!' replied the other. 'There can be no possible harm in having a peep. Do look. It's quite lovely!'

With that, the speaker planted herself in front of the easel, and inspected the picture minutely.

Voices are indicative of character. The low tones of the younger of the two made you look instinctively for the winning sweetness which was in her face and in her soft

brown eyes. All was in harmony with the voice. All soft-voiced creatures are gentle, and kind, and good. A harsh-tongued woman will peck at you like a screeching parrot. But even the parrot drops its voice to a low gurgle when it is amiable and would be caressed.

The one who was addressed as Laura was older by some years, but by no means unattractive. She had gray eyes approaching to blue, and light-brown hair with a tinge of gold at the ends; a matchless complexion; cheeks that rivalled the eglantine hard by; and a jaunty little hat set well back on the bright hair, according to the fashion of the day. A somewhat diminutive figure, inclining to embonpoint. Plump, rounded neck and wrist, and the daintiest of gloves and boots.

The younger was dressed in an almost uniform tint of brown; the elder in more showy fashion, but with no abrupt contrasts. Each had an air of unmistakable breeding and refinement. A man might do a more foolish thing than lose his heart to either

one, on this fine morning in the summer woods.

Woman's curiosity triumphed over prudence. The dark-eyed girl was beside her friend in a moment, gazing intently at the picture. She looked so long and ardently—so silently—that her companion became impatient.

'Don't you think it exquisite?'

'Perfectly beautiful!' Then, with a half-sigh: 'What wouldn't I give to paint like that!'

'You should get him to teach you, Blanche. But, there! we don't know that it is a "him" yet. It may be a woman. Women are so clever nowadays. All except me.'

'A woman wouldn't be sketching in this lonely place.'

'Oh! I don't know that; they do all sorts of things—catch salmon, shoot pheasants, walk the hospitals, climb mountains with short skirts and leather gaiters. I shouldn't half mind the last myself. It must be rather fun, especially if one has good ankles.'

'Hush, Laura! He may hear you.'

'You have made up your mind that it is a "he," then. Oh, what funny little bottles!'

Her eyes had lighted on the tubes of paint lying all higgledy-piggledy on the ground, which she stirred up with her parasol. The next moment one was in her hand, and the delicate tips of her fingers pressed with a fatal suddenness on the yielding metal. Out came a squirt of Prussian blue.

'Ugh!'

'Oh, Laura, what have you done?'

In an instant the Prussian blue was all over gloves and pocket-handkerchief, which latter was pressed suddenly into service, but only to look as if it had come from the dyer's. Laura was in despair.

'What *shall* I do?'

'Wipe your gloves on the grass. Never mind the handkerchief.'

'You are a creature of resources. There!'

She set to work as her companion suggested, but Prussian blue sticks to everything with which it comes in contact with all the tenacity of the Prussian race. Rub, rub, rub! Blanche knelt down to assist her

friend, and in her eagerness overlooked the fact that her own dress was smudging the palette which lay near at hand. At length the dark eyes discovered the new catastrophe, and visible alarm was in those eyes.

'Now we *have* done it. Look there!'

Laura rose, and gazed in the direction indicated, and became the very image of despair. Blanche laughed outright, displaying between her rich, ripe lips teeth of exquisite whiteness.

'Why, Laura, you look more like a naughty schoolgirl than a respectable middle-aged widow! I shall have to drop you as a chaperon; you are always getting into mischief. Good gracious!'

The exclamation was called forth by the sudden appearance of Glyn in the opening of the trees.

'It is not of the least consequence, ladies,' he said.

Laura—otherwise Mrs. Courtenay Byng—uttered a little shriek. Blanche was startled, but remained outwardly calm.

Beverley advanced and raised his hat.

'We owe you a thousand apologies, I am sure,' said Blanche, in demurest tone.

'I am really dreadfully ashamed of myself, and so awfully sorry I have injured your paints,' said Laura, with a twinkle in her eye.

'It does not matter in the very remotest degree, I assure you,' responded Glyn. 'If you don't mind the smell of a little turpentine, I can set matters right in a moment.'

'It does not matter at all about the gloves,' said Mrs. Byng, pulling them off, and displaying the prettiest of dimpled hands; 'but my friend's dress is in a sad state.'

'And we have spoiled your paints,' chimed in Blanche. 'Oh, I am so very sorry!'

'Pray do not think about that. There is no harm done—except to your dress,' he added, looking at it regretfully.

Fascinating little Mrs. Byng thought her gloves might have come in for a larger share of sympathy, and she pouted.

'But pray let me rub off the paint. It will come off easily while it is wet. There would be some difficulty when it is dry.'

'Thanks—but it is giving you so much trouble.'

'None whatever,' responded Glyn, selecting a piece of clean rag.

Glyn was young and enthusiastic. His eyes had met those of the younger lady, and something in them seemed to stir his inmost heart. In fact, it was a trying situation to one whose life had hitherto been passed in simple seclusion. He was secretly shy, though one would not have suspected it from his outward bearing. This sudden invasion of his domain by two women, so lovely that they might have come straight from the spheres, bringing with them an air of something superior to his everyday world, was not a thing that he could encounter with perfect equanimity. And now he was positively kneeling at the feet of the lovelier of the two, holding the skirt of her dress with one hand, and endeavouring to erase the treacherous paint with the other, she looking down on him with grateful eyes the while. Glyn's heart throbbed, and his hand, usually so steady, trembled a little.

A few moments of silence. The twittering of the birds and the hum of insects in the sunny air around became more audible.

'I am sure that will do quite well. How good of you to take so much trouble!'

'Stay—there is a little more here.'

Rub, rub, rub! The last speck was beginning to disappear. Glyn was rather sorry. The voice moved him even more than the eyes. It was a voice one does not meet with twice in a lifetime—so soft, so sympathetic, so penetrating in its musical tones.

Mrs. Byng began to be impatient. She thought the artist had rubbed long enough, and almost wished her own smart dress bore some stains. She had an eye for masculine beauty, and Glyn's form and face were by no means unattractive.

'They will think we are lost, Blanche.'

'Yes'—coming out of a sort of dream. 'There! I am sure it is all off now. Thank you so much!'

Glyn rose, showing unmistakably that he was sorry his task was over. There was a pause. Then the younger lady resumed:

'We took the liberty of looking at your picture. How beautiful it is!'

'I am very glad you think so. I fear I am rather discontented with it myself.'

The dark eyes opened widely.

'Discontented with *that?*'

'I fear so.'

'But why? It seems to me quite perfect.'

Glyn smiled.

'I only hope the critics will think so,' he replied. 'They are somewhat merciless.'

There was a touch of sympathy in the dark-eyed girl when she spoke again. Was it the despondent tone of the artist which evoked it? It seemed so.

'How much I should like my father to see it! He is a great connoisseur. I am sure he would like it. Would you think me very intrusive if I brought him?'

'On the contrary, it will give me great pleasure to show it. Only I fear it is hardly worth coming far to see.'

'Oh, he is not far off! We left him with some friends near the South Lodge. I will go for him at once, if I may.'

'By all means. I feel much pleased that you think my picture worth the trouble.'

'Then we shall probably be back in a quarter of an hour.'

Mrs. Byng struck in: 'If I should not return, I will say good-morning, with many apologies for the trouble I have given you.'

Glyn seemed to awake to the consciousness of her presence.

'I beg you will not mention it,' he said.

'But you will come back with us, Laura?' said her friend.

'I am not sure; I am a little tired. It is no joke climbing the hill a second time in this hot weather.'

She let those dangerous eyes of hers linger a moment on the artist as she bowed her adieus; but he was too much absorbed in the contemplation of the brown ones to notice it. They were about to turn back into the path by which they had arrived—a mere track in the grass and flowers.

'If you are going to the Lodge, this will be your nearest way,' said Glyn, pointing in the opposite direction.

'I know; but the wood is rather too dense that way, if I remember rightly.'

'She is not a stranger, then,' thought Glyn. 'I wonder who she can be.' Then aloud: 'I don't think you will find it so. I have come that way every morning, and have made the path easy. There is this trunk of a tree in the way, which seems to have lain here for years; that is the only obstacle. Let me help you over.'

'Oh, thank you! but I think we can manage it very well.'

Nevertheless, when Glyn advanced, a hand was put out willingly for assistance, so Glyn retained it in his own for some seconds, until the passage of the tree was accomplished. He turned to Mrs. Byng.

'I'm afraid I must have both,' said that lady in a pretty little helpless kind of way. 'I am so dreadfully clumsy, and not so light as my friend. I do hope it isn't hollow.'

Glyn was on top of the trunk, and he was no slight weight.

'You need have no fear on that score,' he

laughed, stamping one foot heavily upon it. 'It's perfectly sound.'

Thus assured, Mrs. Byng put both her dainty little hands into his, and was lifted up in a trice, albeit she did strive to make herself heavier than she really was. The descent on the other side being accomplished, she again turned on him a beaming smile.

'What heaps of trouble we are giving you! Thanks—so much.'

Then she followed her friend, who was already some way down the path.

Glyn returned to his easel, and for the first time since he commenced his picture experienced a strange feeling of solitude. Then he broke into soliloquy :

'What a lovely creature! Not altogether lovely, either, but so winning. And what on earth is it in her voice? I seem to hear its cadence now. Who can she be, I wonder? Her father a great connoisseur, she said. I wonder what he will say to this. I'm half sorry now that they have seen it. But then, if they had not, I should not have seen her, and I wouldn't have lost the sight of that

face, or the tone of that voice, for a kingdom. I think now a touch or two more may improve this bit of foreground.'

He set to work again ; but it must be confessed that his thoughts were running more upon his recent visitors than upon his picture. The still noon seemed to dwell upon all around. The song of the birds was reduced to an occasional twitter among the branches. The yellow butterfly fluttered idly by ; now and then a wild bee hummed across the opening ; the lark had stilled his morning song, and was at rest amid the grass. Even the bleat of the sheep became musical, mellowed by distance and the intervening leafage. Presently voices were heard again, and Glyn rose and waited in some anxiety. A moment after, four figures were seen coming up the path — the two ladies we have seen before, an elderly gentleman, and a younger one.

'You see, I have come back after all,' said Mrs. Byng, as soon as they were within speaking distance. 'I could not resist another peep at your picture.'

CHAPTER II.

AN INVITATION.

'Let me introduce my father, Sir Percy Venables.'

Glyn found himself bowing to a silver-haired man of about sixty, and was dimly conscious that this must be the great man of the district, and the owner of the broad lands and park of which the wood was a part. This much had he learned from the gossips at the Coach and Horses.

'I have not the pleasure of knowing your name,' Miss Venables resumed, as if in apology for the one-sided introduction.

'Beverley—Glyn Beverley.'

'Any relation to the Glyns of Firwolds?' asked Sir Percy.

'My mother was a Glyn of Firwolds,' the artist replied briefly.

'Ah, indeed! My daughter has quite fallen in love with your picture. May I be permitted to see it?'

'By all means. It is here.'

'Ah, charming—charming!' said Sir Percy, taking up a position in front of the picture, and wagging his head from side to side with a glass to his eye to catch the best light. ''Pon my word, excellent—most excellent! Quite a success, I declare.'

'I am very glad you think so,' said Beverley. 'I have certainly endeavoured to keep as close to Nature as possible.'

'Indeed you have—indeed you have. Most wonderfully truthful. I congratulate you, sir. But am I right? A little crude just in that corner, eh?—just a very little.'

Like all other would-be connoisseurs, Sir Percy felt it was hardly the correct thing to give unqualified praise; and, indeed, it is possible that he was quite conscientious in his objection. Those who assume, or are accredited with, a critical knowledge of art,

lose the unadulterated enjoyment of the ignoramus in the contemplation of a fine work. The habit of searching for defects grows upon them, until they begin to imagine them where they do not exist. That keen analyst Schlegel says, and says truly, that great minds enjoy beauties while little ones are searching for defects.

'You will observe that the green is very intense in Nature just in that spot,' said Glyn. 'I don't think I have overdone it.'

'Perhaps not—perhaps not,' said the Baronet, retreating before the palpable fact, then rallying again; 'but it is not always advisable to keep too closely to Nature, is it?'

'In so perfect a scene as this I should not be disposed to depart from what I see. Perhaps I may be quixotic, but if I intentionally alter any scene I am painting, I have the sensation of having told a lie.'

The dark-eyed girl looked up quickly, Mrs. Byng smiled, Sir Percy gave a sidelong glance at the artist, and murmured to himself: 'A singular young man, an original—evidently an original.'

'It seems to me,' pursued Glyn, 'that Nature admits of no compromise. There is your scene, and you should paint it truthfully or not at all. If we allow imagination to step in, and leave out this, and put in that, we may as well go back to Sir George Beaumont's brown tree at once.'

Sir Percy was not good at argument. He had certain crochets, but had hardly the intellect to do battle in order to maintain them. He was easily routed, so he shifted his ground.

'Quite the modern view of art, I see. Well, you have made good your words by producing a very charming picture. I like it immensely—immensely.'

'Isn't that bit of sunlight delightful?' struck in Blanche.

'Quite charming—quite charming! like a bit of real light, I declare. Excuse my asking, but have you done much in this way, exhibited much? I don't remember anything similar to this in the Academy.'

'No, indeed; I look upon this more as a recreation. My chief occupation is portrait-painting.'

'Had you anything in the Academy last year?' asked Blanche.

'Yes, one picture: a portrait of a lady in a white dress with an open sunshade.'

'Of course!' exclaimed Blanche in an excited tone. 'I thought I remembered your name. It hung in the second room.'

'Yes.'

'Don't you remember, papa? The one we all liked so much. I remember calling you back to look at it. Laura, you were with us. You must remember it.'

Mrs. Byng was chattering with the second gentleman of the party. He was a young man of about three or four and twenty; clear-eyed, but heavy featured, and for his age most inordinately fat—so fat, indeed, that every movement was an effort, and he had not yet quite regained his breath after the ascent of the hill.

'Oh yes! I remember it perfectly,' said Mrs. Byng. 'You were with us also, Mr. Forbes. You must remember it.'

''Pon my honour, I don't,' was the response. 'There's such an awful lot of

pictures there that I jumble them all up together.'

'How stupid of you!' said Mrs. Byng. 'I know I made you put a mark against it in the catalogue.'

'But you made me put a mark against about three hundred. It was impossible to remember half of them. Besides, I've no head for that sort of thing, don't you know.'

'But don't you like this very much?' asked Blanche.

'Yes, I like that very well.' Then, by way of saying something civil: 'It must be awfully hard to do, ain't it? I can't think how you do it. I couldn't, to save my life.'

Miss Venables laughed outright.

'I don't think you're particularly fond of doing anything, Mr. Forbes, except smoking surreptitious pipes. It's lucky you have Mrs. Byng to keep you in order. I know you're dying for one now. Am I not right?'

'Well, to tell you the truth, you are.'

'But I don't intend to allow it,' cried Mrs. Byng. 'I shall let you off duty by-and-by, and then you may indulge as much as you

like. I don't know what would become of you if I didn't look after you.'

'Is it fair to ask who your sitter was, Mr. Beverley?' asked Miss Venables. 'We thought her so very pretty. You only put that provoking "Portrait of a Lady" in the catalogue, if I remember rightly.'

'It is no secret—it was my sister,' Glyn answered.

'How pretty she must be!' said Blanche musingly.

'Do you flatter your sitters, Mr. Beverley?' asked Mrs. Byng archly. 'If so, I might be tempted to ask you to paint me.'

Glyn was in a dilemma. He must pay the usual trite compliment, or appear boorish. Sir Percy came to his rescue, speaking with the privilege of his years.

'Why, my dear Mrs. Byng, you have been painted scores of times, and yet they have never made you half as pretty as you are, I must admit. But, upon my life, I should very much like to have you painted, Blanche. Now I think of it, this would be a capital opportunity.'

'Oh, papa! It is not worth while,' protested Blanche, in sincere self-depreciation.

'Let me be the best judge of that, my dear. What do you say, Mr. Beverley? could you undertake it? Something in the style of the one at the Academy, you know.'

'I should be only too delighted,' answered Beverley.

'What shall we arrange, then? What stay do you make here?'

'I can make any arrangement that will suit Miss Venables.'

'You can come to us?'

'Yes.'

'We can place a room entirely at your disposal. We are close at hand—Lupton Park. You could pursue your landscape studies here at the same time.'

'You are very good. That reminds me that I have been a trespasser all this time.'

'Not a bit of it. Artists are privileged, you know. We don't, as a rule, like the pheasants disturbed, but you won't carry off any eggs. Have the keepers found you out?'

'Yes; but I managed to conciliate them by promising to keep to one beat.'

'Quite so—quite so. But now, about this picture. When would it suit you, Blanche?'

'Whenever it is convenient to Mr. Beverley,' said Blanche. 'That is, if it must be done.'

'We shan't have a better opportunity, you know, so it had better be settled. Let me see—what day is this? Would Monday next suit you, Mr. Glyn?—I beg pardon, I mean Beverley. Knew the Glyns slightly, many years ago, though—before your time. What do you say to Monday next, Blanche?'

'It will suit me perfectly well.'

'Well, let us say Monday. You can take your time, you know, Mr. Glyn—Beverley, I mean. Come to us on Monday, at any rate. You can begin as soon after as you like, but there is no absolute hurry. I'm told it's a good plan to study the face of your subject beforehand; this will give you the opportunity, you know.'

Glyn was on thorns. However willing he might be to study the sweet face before him,

he felt that it was an ordeal which would be absolutely repugnant to one so delicate-minded as Miss Venables appeared to be. He could have choked Sir Percy for his maunderings, while, at the same time, he inwardly blessed him for giving him so rare an opportunity of putting forth his best powers.

'I shall hardly have my materials from town by Monday; but I shall be pleased to come on that day, as you are so good as to suggest. There is no need to persecute Miss Venables, however, until I really commence.'

'It is rather dreadful, I must confess, to think one is undergoing a process of constant inspection,' said Blanche.

'It is nothing when you are used to it, dear,' struck in Mrs. Byng, with the air of one who had been martyrized times without number.

'It is a process to which I have no desire to become inured,' responded her friend. Then, as if feeling the speech was a little ungracious to the artist, she added: 'But I shall be quite pleased to give Mr. Beverley

as many sittings as he may think necessary, since papa wishes to have the picture.'

Glyn bowed his thanks, with increasing respect for the unaffected common-sense of the girl who was to be his next subject.

'We must be going,' said the Baronet. 'It is quite arranged, then,' he added, turning to the artist. 'We shall look for you on Monday. Come as early as you like. Good-day. Very pleased to have made your acquaintance.'

He was moving away, when a thought suddenly seemed to strike him:

'By the way, if you could conveniently bring your landscape with you, I think it would be advisable. We are expecting some visitors. It might be an advantage to you.'

'Thanks very much,' said Glyn. 'I will certainly bring it.'

A warm shake of the hand from the Baronet, a frank 'good-bye' from his daughter, a fascinating smile and bow from Mrs. Byng, and they were gone—all except Mr. Forbes, who lingered. When the others were out of earshot, he spoke:

'I say.'

'Yes?'

'Do you think you can hit her off?'

'I hope so.'

'She's awfully pretty, ain't she? I can't think how the deuce you do it. Have a cigar?'

'Thanks,' said Glyn, selecting one from the proffered case.

Then Mr. Forbes said good-morning, and moved off after the others, and Glyn was again left to the silence of the woods.

CHAPTER III.

A DULL DAY WITH A BRIGHT ENDING.

Looking from the window of the Coach and Horses at an early hour next morning, Glyn beheld a dismal prospect. A change had come over the aspect of Nature—a change so great that it seemed difficult to realize the fact that he was in the same glad world which literally revelled in sunshine twenty-four hours ago—a sunshine which shed its gifts of gold upon man, and bird, and beast, with a hand more lavish than that of the last Lydian king when he showered his treasures on the renowned temple of Delphi.

If Nature was a sybarite yesterday, she became a Spartan to-day; for the strong south-west gale lashed the woods and fields

with thongs of stinging hail and rain. No anchorite of old could have torn his vile body with more cruel self-inflicted stripes than Nature dealt herself this day. The dragging rain-clouds swooped along the hillsides. Fierce channels of whitened waters swept down the chalk roads, leaving a hundred miniature deltas on the soddened fields below. Every separate leaf and branch sent its little cascade to the spongy moss beneath. Sheep huddled under the lee of stray patches of gorse on the uplands above, while the wretched cattle in the fields below crammed their tails into the hedgerows to escape, as best they might, the fury of the storm.

Glyn's sketching umbrella no longer reared its white dome like a huge mushroom amid the summer grass. The flowers, shapeless and forlorn, lay scattered and strewn like dead victims of some fairy warfare; while the melancholy birds—the sunshine's truest revellers—hidden in the densest coverts of the woods, were too sad even for a solitary chirp.

Harleyford was not a big place, and there were but few people to talk to. Glyn, how-

ever, had struck up an acquaintance with the Vicar, Mr. Dyke, who had a taste for art, so he seized the opportunity of an idle day to accept an oft-repeated invitation to lunch at the Vicarage. The view of Lupton Park from the window led to the subject of yesterday's meeting in the woods, and the Vicar expressed some surprise on hearing that the Venables had returned.

'I go there on Monday to paint Miss Venables,' said Glyn.

The Vicar opened his eyes wide.

''Pon my word, you are a lucky man!' he said. 'It is seldom an artist gets such a lovely face to paint.'

'Nor such a charming girl, either,' said Mrs. Dyke. 'Clever, but with the sweetest disposition in the world. She has, of course, had great responsibilities since her mother's death, but she manages the house admirably.'

'And her father, too,' said the Vicar; 'and I don't know a man who requires more careful management. I find it rather difficult to get on with him in parish matters. It doesn't do to rub him the wrong way.'

'Miss Venables seems very charming,' said Glyn.

'And clever as well,' said Mrs. Dyke. 'If she had been obliged to get her living, I believe she would have made a figure in the world. Her singing is exquisite—that is, when you can get her to sing, for she has a very modest estimate of her own ability.'

'I suppose you will let us have a peep at the picture when it is far enough advanced,' said the Vicar. 'It ought to make your fortune. Blanche Venables will become a much more important personage by-and-by than she is at present. The title dies with Sir Percy, and she is sole heiress to the estates. A trying position for a young and pretty girl.'

Glyn spent the day with the Vicar, but declined staying to dine, as he wished to prepare for his work the next day, in case the weather should clear up. Moreover, he had letters to write.

The rain came on again in torrents as he reached his quarters at the village inn. The prospects for the morrow were certainly not

cheerful. He was about to settle himself to his work, when the sound of a horse's feet outside fell upon his ear. He walked listlessly to the window, and looked out.

A man on horseback was at the door. He handed a note to the landlord, who was standing in the porch. A minute or two later the note was brought to Glyn.

It ran as follows :

'DEAR SIR,

'My father desires me to say that, as he is sure you cannot work in this weather, and must find it somewhat dull at the inn, he will be very pleased if you will come to us at once.

'Should it be convenient for you to do so, a carriage shall be sent for you at any hour you like to name.

'Believe me,

'Yours truly,

'BLANCHE VENABLES.'

'Lupton Park, Wednesday.'

The small conventionalities of life some-

times interfere sadly with our enjoyments. As Glyn read the note, he remembered he had no dress clothes with him, and he could not very well present himself at Lupton Park without them.

A moment's reflection, however, told him what was the right thing to do. He wrote the following to Sir Percy himself:

'DEAR SIR,

'I have received your kind invitation through Miss Venables. Unfortunately, I have no dress clothes with me, nor shall I have for a day or two. If you have no one with you, and will receive me as I am, I shall be delighted to come at once.

'Yours very truly,

'GLYN BEVERLEY.'

To which note an answer came in half an hour from Sir Percy himself:

'MY DEAR SIR,

'Never mind your clothes. We are quite a small party, and shall be very pleased

to see you. The carriage comes with this.

'Very truly yours,

'PERCY VENABLES.'

So Glyn set out for Lupton, and on arriving was delivered by the hall-porter into the custody of 'Thomas,' who, with every mark of respect — for your well-trained servant is respectful even to the humblest guest—conducted him up the big staircase to his room, where, meekly requesting the key of Glyn's bag, he proceeded forthwith to dive among the clothes for the requisites of the coming toilet.

'I have explained to Sir Percy that I have no dress clothes with me,' said Glyn, observing a puzzled look on Thomas's face as he turned over the shirts and socks. 'They will be here to-morrow.'

'Yes, sir,' answered Thomas, as if relieved of a responsibility. 'Dinner at half-past seven, sir,' he added.

Glyn, luckily, had brought a black coat, so he made as good a toilet as he could under

the circumstances, and passed down the great staircase somewhat impressed by the splendours of the house.

He found Sir Percy in the drawing-room, and received a hearty welcome.

'If I had thought of it, I should have asked you when we met yesterday,' the Baronet said; 'but it didn't occur to me that you were alone at the inn. Do they treat you pretty well there?'

'Yes, fairly. It is small, but it is clean.'

'And that's a great point,' struck in Sir Percy. 'My daughter has a fancy for getting into out-of-the-way places abroad, where there is next to nothing in the way of hotel accommodation, and what I go through I can't describe. Have you ever been at Bouillon?'

'Never.'

'Ah! Pretty place—Belgian frontier—castle of the renowned Godfrey, and all that sort of thing, you know—go there to get to Sedan; but of all the places for dirt! Bless my soul, the place reeked!'

'Indeed,' said Glyn, wondering when the ladies were coming.

'Yes,' pursued the Baronet, too much engrossed with the remembrance of what he had gone through to relinquish the subject. 'Hotel there, where that unlucky Emperor slept the night after the capitulation—only one in the place—built over a stable. Went into it, and was positively knocked backwards by the odour—knocked backwards, my dear sir, I assure you.'

'But were you obliged to stay there?'

'Stay there? no, impossible. Beat a retreat, and got some lodgings at a leather-cutter's—positively at a leather-cutter's; and how that unfortunate Emperor could have stood it passes my comprehension.'

'Perhaps he was too much overwhelmed by his reverses to think of smaller matters,' suggested Glyn.

'Think of them, my dear sir!' echoed the Baronet. 'There was no need to think of them; they thrust themselves upon you whether you thought of them or not. Blanche wanted to sketch the castle, but that inn

seemed to pervade the whole place, and we got away next morning.'

'Without the sketch?'

'Yes, without the sketch. It was not to be borne, you know.'

Glyn heard a soft rustle behind him. He had been watching the door, but Miss Venables came from an inner drawing-room on the other side. She held out her hand.

'How do you do?' she said softly. 'Very pleased you are able to come to us.'

Glyn thought her even prettier than on the previous day. It is useless to deny the fact that even the prettiest faces are under obligations to pretty dresses. There was a vague softness about Miss Venables' dress, an indefinite mingling of silk and lace and tulle, which was exquisitely becoming, and Glyn at that moment almost despaired of ever being able to convey such beauty to canvas.

'Mr. Beverley—my cousin, Miss Maitland.'

Glyn found himself bowing to a girl who had followed Miss Venables into the room.

He could not help regarding her attentively, there was something so uncommon in her appearance. She was not actually pretty, but there was an indefinable sentiment about her which made you think her so. Her face was perfectly pale, her hair the lightest brown, her eyes pure gray. Her figure was slight and delicate in the extreme, but graceful and easy in its movements. She wore white silk, with scarcely any adornments. The only scrap of colour from head to foot was one blush rose in her bosom.

'A zephyr might waft her away,' thought Glyn, as he returned the gaze of the earnest eyes which lingered on him a moment as his name was mentioned.

Artists and actors are generally sources of curiosity to the young. Whether they expect to see flashes of genius darting out of their eyes, or whether they regard them as a species of *lusus naturæ* to be avoided, is a question ; but it is certain that Sib Maitland, as her friends called her, allowed her eyes, from under their deep lashes, to dwell on Glyn a moment longer than they would on

men in general. Then, in an instant, she seemed to become conscious of it, and the faintest tinge of pink flitted over her cheek, like the reflection of the flower she wore.

Glyn did not notice it, however, for at that moment he was conscious of the approach of Mrs. Courtenay Byng, who was not given to gliding into rooms, but made her presence known at once. There was a rustle of silk, a jingle of bracelets, a perfume of 'White Rose,' and a flutter of fan which proclaimed her before you turned your head, and Glyn turned his to behold her radiant in eau-de-nil silk, which set off the fresh roses of her cheeks to perfection. She held out her plump little hand with a fortune in diamonds and opals on its taper fingers.

'Have you brought your lovely picture, Mr. Beverley? I have been dreaming of it, I assure you.'

'I am glad you like it so much,' said Glyn. 'Yes, it is here. Sir Percy was good enough to request me to bring it.'

'You've not seen it, Sibyl,' said Miss Venables to her cousin.

'No, I should like so much to do so, if I may.'

The voice was as delicate as the speaker —almost a monotone, with a low, quick utterance, but perfectly distinct.

'Oh, certainly,' answered Glyn, meeting the soft gray eyes once more.

Everything went like clockwork at Lupton. Where there are unlimited means and unlimited servants there is no excuse for unpunctuality, and Sir Percy was an exasperatingly punctual man, as most old gentlemen are to whom life comes smoothly and with scarce a cloud. Exactly at half-past seven dinner was announced.

'Will you take my daughter, Mr. Beverley?' said Sir Percy, as he gave his arm to Mrs. Courtenay Byng. 'Sibyl,' he added, 'I fear you will have to get on by yourself. I thought D'Eyncourt would have been here in time for dinner.'

Another little flush flitted over Miss Maitland's cheek as the Baronet spoke, but it was unobserved in the general move.

'I was telling Mr. Beverley of our experience at Bouillon, Blanche,' said Sir Percy,

when he had fairly settled to his soup. 'You will confirm what I say, I'm sure, about that abominable inn.'

'Yes, but I was very sorry to miss my sketch. Have you seen the castle, Mr. Beverley? The castle of the renowned Godfrey, you know.'

'No, I have not been there,' answered Glyn. 'Is it very fine?'

'Yes, a splendid old place, on a steep hill overlooking the river, which makes a sudden bend there. We were there in autumn; I never saw anything to equal the tints in the woods which surround the castle. Our own are very lovely, but they cannot compare with the woods at Bouillon.'

'Your beeches must be very fine in autumn.'

'Indeed they are. You should pay us another visit at that time. It would be quite worth your while.'

'I should like it, of all things. Indeed, I am so much in love with the neighbourhood that I hope to come here often. It is a new style of scenery to me.'

'And yet you ought to know it well,' said Sir Percy. 'Your family, at least your mother's family, had extensive possessions in these parts. Wasn't there a queer affair about a will or something connected with the estates?'

'It was about the Firwolds property,' said Glyn. 'It was known that my uncle made a will in favour of my mother and her children, but the will never turned up. I don't exactly know the particulars—I was quite a child at the time—but I believe everything was done that could be done. There was a previous will which gave the property to a distant cousin. I derive one consolation from our loss, however. If the property had come to us, in all probability I should never have taken to art.'

'And would have missed a very enjoyable life,' said Miss Venables.

'Yes, indeed,' answered Glyn. 'Although,' he added, 'the pursuit of art is a lifelong struggle after something we never quite attain —a perpetual striving to reach an impossible ideal.'

'A gloomy view of an artist's life,' said Miss Venables.

'A true one, I fear,' responded Glyn. 'I should mistrust any man who was thoroughly satisfied with his work.'

Sir Percy and Mrs. Byng were deep in conversation. Glyn fell into a *tête-à-tête* with Miss Venables.

'You will not take so gloomy a view of an artist's life by-and-by. I mean when you have gained more complete success, and your name is more widely known,' she said.

'Then, I fear, if indeed that time should ever come, I may tumble into that most fatal of all pitfalls, carelessness. It seems to be the inevitable result of great success.'

'But it need not be. A man devoted to his art, whatever his success might be, would surely go on striving for art's sake.'

'He might; but how few do!'

'Do you feel that you would follow the many?'

'That remains to be proved. I see no reason for supposing I am more strong-minded than others.'

There was a short pause.

'Do you remember Fra Angelico's life?' she asked at length.

'Yes, perfectly.'

'How he shut himself out from the world to devote himself exclusively to art? How he refused all pecuniary rewards for his work, and made each picture a matter of prayer?'

'But with him art was religion,' said Glyn.

'And why should it not be with others?' she asked quickly.

Glyn looked up. There was a flush of feeling, of enthusiasm, in his questioner which surprised him.

'I am afraid we are all more or less sceptics nowadays, in art as well as religion,' he said. 'We throw over our faith in the great masters as we do in deeper things. We no longer put our trust in the Bible, but in School Boards.'

'And art declines.'

'In loftiness of conception, certainly, though our impressionists would consider any man a heretic who said so. But I confess, when I think of the work achieved

by the great masters, I cannot help smiling at the efforts of some men, now living, whom the world calls great. Put them beside Rubens or Paul Veronese! What pigmies they seem! A haystack or a flock of geese seems the end and aim of art now.'

'I am afraid I cannot get up any enthusiasm for Rubens. There are others I so much prefer. Rubens seems always to paint without a soul.'

'Still, one stands amazed at his power and versatility. His rapidity must have been something astounding. His work seemed to flood a continent.'

'Of course you have been in Rome, Mr. Beverley?' struck in Mrs. Courtenay Byng.

'I regret to say I have not,' Glyn answered with some constraint.

'Haven't you really?' exclaimed the gay widow. 'I thought all artists went to Rome. Don't you care about it?'

'Very much indeed,' responded Glyn. 'I hope to go one day. We have not all the opportunity.'

He might have added 'or the means,' but

that would have been an affectation. Mrs. Byng went on :

'But it is so easy now ; you can get there in two or three days.'

The notion of the want of fifty pounds to do it with never entered the widow's head. Miss Venables seemed to read the difficulty, and with ready tact came to the rescue.

'Some of our best artists never went to Rome, I believe,' she said.

'Some few,' Glyn answered. 'There are some notable exceptions, certainly, but I always look upon it that going to Rome is to an artist what taking a degree is to a man of letters. It gives him a status he does not otherwise possess, unless his talent is something astounding ; then, of course, he can override all obstacles.'

'You should come next winter, Mr. Beverley,' said Mrs. Byng. 'I shall be there most probably, and I should like to introduce you to some friends of mine.'

'There is nothing I should enjoy more, if I could so arrange it,' said Glyn.

CHAPTER IV.

A MOONLIGHT MEETING.

'No more wine?' said the Baronet, soon after the ladies had left the room.

'No, thank you,' answered Glyn, who was severely abstemious.

So, instead of putting themselves under the table in the attractive fashion of our forefathers, Glyn and the Baronet went to the drawing-room.

Miss Maitland was just finishing Spohr's exquisite 'Rose softly blooming,' and Glyn begged a repetition, which was accorded. There was a certain sweetness in the girl's voice which attracted him, but there was also a tendency to dreaminess and sentimentality which rendered the performance weak.

Sir Percy was soon absorbed in the papers. Mrs. Byng was turning over some photographs on the table. Miss Maitland, who had a trick of sitting on low stools—a pardonable affectation, since it evolves some picturesque attitudes—was seated near the open window, through which the moonlight was streaming in a silent flood, for the rain had ceased, and the sky was quite clear.

'Tell me what you think of my last photograph, Mr. Beverley,' said Mrs. Byng, holding up an album.

Glyn went to her and glanced at it a moment.

'I am not given to paying compliments, but it doesn't do you justice, Mrs. Byng.'

'Oh, I am so disappointed!' said the widow, with a little pout. 'I thought you would admire it immensely.'

'So I should, if it were worthy of the original,' Glyn felt constrained to say. 'You know, it is plain people who come out best in photography,' he added. 'Photographs of pretty faces are generally disappointing.'

The widow was conciliated, and gave Glyn one of her sweetest smiles.

'What a wonderful change in the weather!' she said, going to the window. 'Fancy having such a splendid night after such a day! There is time for a stroll on the terrace. Sib, will you come?'

'I should like it, of all things,' said Sibyl.

'I should strongly recommend shawls and goloshes,' said Miss Venables.

'But of course you will come, Blanche?' exclaimed Mrs. Byng.

'No; I will stay with papa. Mr. Beverley will take care of you, I dare say.'

Glyn was provoked. He was a man of quick sympathies, and all his desire was to linger in the drawing-room with the lady of the party towards whom he was most drawn.

But there was no help for it; the shawls were brought, and Glyn passed out of the low window after Mrs. Byng and Miss Maitland.

The weather had indeed undergone a change. It was a magnificent night, but

under the circumstances Glyn was in no humour to enjoy it. He listened to Mrs. Byng's somewhat inane prattle with considerable impatience. Miss Maitland was silent as usual. 'I wonder if she ever speaks,' thought Glyn. Presently she wandered away from them into the deep shade of some beeches, which stood up spectral in the moonlight to the left of the house.

'She looks like a ghost in white gliding among those mysterious shadows,' said Glyn.

'Good gracious! don't suggest such an idea,' exclaimed his companion. 'I'm frightened to death at the thought of a ghost, for I firmly believe in them.'

'The ghost is laid,' said Glyn, as Miss Maitland disappeared in the shadow. 'Is she always so silent?'

'Generally; but, then, she is very young, scarcely eighteen, and I should imagine they live a very quiet life in the country.'

'Does she live near here? I fancy I have seen her.'

'Yes; her father is the rector of a parish

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about fifteen miles from here. Pretty, don't you think her ?'

'Well, interesting.'

'You artists are so critical. I hope you are satisfied with your sitter that is to be.'

'Indeed I am.'

'She is very lovely, I must admit ; but she was prettier three years ago, before——'

She stopped abruptly.

'Before what ?' pursued Glyn.

'Oh, nothing in particular ; but she was much prettier, there is no doubt, three years ago. More of rosy girlhood about her. She is so very staid now.'

'The responsibility of her position,' suggested Glyn.

'Not altogether. But she is a dear girl, and I am very fond of her,' she added as if to evade the subject.

They wandered from the terrace on to the lower paths, and looked over the slopes, where,

> 'The deer half in the glimmer strewed the hollows of the park.'

The notes of the piano reached them as

they went on, and Glyn could hardly conceal his impatience to return. Mrs. Byng took in the situation. She was too skilled in flirtation to endeavour to restrain a neophyte.

'You would like to return and have some more music,' she said. 'How idiotic it is not to be fond of music! but I confess I do not care for it. It is a little chilly; perhaps we had better go in. Might I take your arm up the slope? It is rather slippery.'

By the time they reached the terrace, however, the music had ceased.

'Where can that mad girl Sibyl be?' said Mrs. Byng. 'I must look for her.'

'Pray let me do that,' Glyn answered with another effort to control his impatience.

'Oh, thanks, so much. I don't think we ought to leave her out here alone, although she did desert us.'

Glyn turned along the terrace, at the end of which was the beech-grove wherein Sibyl Maitland had disappeared. It was not more than a hundred yards across, and presently he could see the moonlight bright upon the drive which swept round the grove to the

hall-door. Finding no one there, he was about to retrace his steps, when a sound struck his ear—the noise of a horse's hoof upon the hard ground. He turned his head.

A little more to the right, in the shadow of the trees bordering the drive, he saw two figures: a man leading a horse, and a woman in a white dress.

The woman was Miss Maitland, without a doubt. The man was tall, and, with the bridle thrown over his arm, he was leaning down, apparently in earnest conversation, but the tones were too low to be heard.

Glyn judged it prudent to beat a retreat. He retraced his steps to the house, but was destined to be the disturber of moonlight colloquies and reveries. As he turned the angle of the terrace, he came suddenly upon Miss Venables.

'Oh, Mr. Beverley! is that you?' she exclaimed as Glyn approached. 'Have you found Sibyl? Mrs. Byng told me you had gone to look for her.'

'She will be here presently,' said Glyn, not knowing what else to say. Then, to change

the subject: 'What a magnificent night! The flood of moonlight seems actually to have swept away the stars. The heavens are filled with it to overflowing.'

He talked on, to avoid a recurrence to the subject of Miss Maitland, but at that moment the young lady in question emerged from the beech-grove and came towards them.

'Why, Sibyl, have you taken to solitary wanderings?' asked her cousin.

'It is such a lovely night,' answered Sibyl briefly.

'And you prefer the company of your own thoughts?'

'Sometimes.'

Glyn was discreetly silent. The girl's face betrayed no emotion. She looked supremely happy, but more fragile than ever in the white moonlight.

'I promised you some music, Mr. Beverley; shall we go in?' said Miss Venables.

'I should like it, of all things,' Glyn answered with alacrity.

So they went back to the drawing-room. Sir Percy was having a nap. Mrs. Byng

had disappeared. Sibyl took up a book. Miss Venables went to the piano. Glyn glanced unconsciously at Sir Percy.

'Oh, it won't disturb papa,' said Blanche, reading Glyn's look. 'He sleeps through Chopin and Beethoven serenely. Which shall it be? The "Moonlight Sonata"?'

'If you will be so kind. One never tires of that.'

The lamp was at the other end of the room, but there was quite enough light from the moon to enable the fair performer's fingers to wander over the notes at will. Glyn seated himself where he could watch her face as he listened to those matchless notes.

And so with perfect taste she played that exquisite adagio movement until Glyn was in a seventh heaven of delight, and then his sentimentality—for he had not yet passed the sentimental age—was tempered by the livelier tones of Chopin's 'Impromptu,' which again gave place to Schumann's 'Schlummerlied,' so dreamy and tender. And then the door opened and a tall man entered the

room, and Glyn's delightful dream came to an end.

Miss Venables rose and shook hands with the new-comer.

'You are late,' she said quietly. 'I hope you have had something to eat. Papa expected you to dinner.'

'I was detained. Dawe has looked after my creature comforts, thanks.'

He glanced at Glyn.

'Captain D'Eyncourt, Mr. Glyn Beverley,' said Miss Venables.

Both men bowed, and eyed each other doubtfully, as is the custom of Englishmen when they first meet. Captain D'Eyncourt crossed the room.

'Miss Maitland, how do you do?'

Sibyl looked up quietly and shook hands.

'She is not a bad actress,' thought Glyn, 'but it is odd that I should have stumbled on a mysterious meeting the very night of my arrival.'

CHAPTER V.

NEXT MORNING.

'Not looking so well as she did before—*what?*' was the question Glyn propounded to himself as he opened his eyes next morning; but having no clue, he of course went on speculating in vain.

It was a magnificent morning. The glass must have taken quite a leap upward since the day before. Glyn was out of bed and at the window long before Thomas made his appearance. He drew up the blinds, and threw open the window to drink in the fresh, pure, sunny air, which filled the world with gladness.

Lupton Court was situated on an elevated plateau of the park, and Glyn looked straight

over some twenty miles of magnificently wooded country, before his eyes rested on the dim, blue hills which bounded the view. Massed by the morning mists, there was a perfect sea of foliage before him, with undulations of leafage like a ground-swell, and here and there a ripple, where the leaves were stirred by the breeze as a glassy sea is stirred by a wind of June. Great herds of deer were browsing on the wide slopes of grass, half hidden here and there by square patches of bracken, which were kept in park-like order, but which served to vary the monotony of the smooth green turf. The beeches—more magnificent than any Glyn had yet seen, with their knotted moss-grown roots and green and silver boles— stood up grandly here and there, sometimes in clumps, sometimes in solitary stateliness. Far away to the left, a strip of blue sea closed the view, and between it and the park a line of white steam, hovering in the still air, showed the course of an early train.

Glyn leaned far out over the window-sill, and met the faint entrancing odour of a

magnolia which spread its great creamy petals below. The house was an old one, with broad, stone-mullioned windows and gabled ends. Quaint carvings of man, and bird, and beast flanked and surmounted the lintels. as if the architect and workmen of the olden days had no fixed purpose, but had broken out into pleasant fancies as the work went on.

Time too, who is always our friend if we will trust him, and not try to anticipate his actions, had given the finishing touches of beauty to the quaint old mansion. Not all the looms of Genoa or Lyons could surpass in richness and softness the mosses and lichens which clothed the gray stones—a mingling of crimson and gold, and green and gray, in tints so exquisitely pure that Glyn sighed to think how vainly his poor pigments might strive to reach their harmony. Those anomalies, the roses, too—which blush so persistently, and yet come smiling in at our windows with such perfect yet careless grace—were everywhere: in the parterres beneath; round the Gothic porch; leaning their carmine cheeks against the glossy leaves of the magnolia;

tapping softly at the windows of the sleepers, as if they wished to say : 'Why don't you wake up and open your window and let in our fragrance ?' Thick clustering ivy, too, soared away so ambitiously that even the very chimneys were assailed ; but it still crept upwards, as if it would fain reach the blue sky above and lose itself in its dreamy depths.

'If there is one thing more than another that we have to thank God for, it is the blue sky,' said Glyn, as his eyes followed the course of the ivy into the stainless ether. 'Fancy, if we had to gaze everlastingly at a canopy of crimson, or yellow, or green ! How sick we should get of it ! But the blue is an everlasting joy. And there goes a lark who quite agrees with me, I'm sure, for his notes seem to flood all the world below.'

Glyn dressed as quickly as possible, as he was anxious for a stroll before breakfast. He made his way across the lawn to the beech-grove, where the sunlight was lying on the lichened boles in great flakes and splashes of gold, and the shadows were making a blue-black tracery on the ground. The trunks of

the beeches were so colossal that a person behind one was easily hidden from view. Glyn reached the extremity of the grove near the drive, and, on turning round a tree, came suddenly upon Miss Maitland.

She was seated on one of the moss-grown roots that projected above the ground. An open book was in her lap, and her head was thrown back against the tree, and as Glyn came upon her, she was gazing out absently across the park towards the distant sea. He had thought her interesting the night before; but, with the flecks of sunshine lighting up her hair, and with the faint tint of colour which the morning walk had given to her delicate cheek, she looked quite pretty. There was a peculiar dreamy softness also in her eyes which added to the charm.

She started as Glyn's footstep fell on her ear, and half rose.

'Good-morning, Miss Maitland,' he said, raising his cap. 'I had no idea I should find anyone down. Have you been here long?'

'Not long,' she answered, rising and

shaking hands. I am always awake early, and the morning is so lovely.'

Glyn thought the wakefulness odd in one so young. He considered himself quite venerable in comparison with the girl before him.

'What are your studies?' he asked, pointing to the book.

'The novel everyone is talking about,' she answered, holding it towards him.

'Ah!' said Glyn, running his eyes over the leaves. 'Rather sensational, isn't it?'

'It is, decidedly,' said Sibyl with a little laugh. 'Most novels are nowadays.'

'Yes, the old order changes with novels, as with everything else,' said Glyn. 'They must be flavoured to suit the taste of the day. Even Scott is at a discount with young people now, and Dickens does not possess half the charm for the rising generation that he did a few years ago. It is all rush and hurry now, in books as well as in real life. How lovely that bit of blue sea looks, through the trees yonder!' he added.

'Yes. This is a favourite seat of mine.

The view is so pretty. I come here very often.'

Glyn thought of the night before, and was silent.

'By the way, what has become of Mr. Forbes?' he asked. 'He was with Miss Venables and Sir Percy the day before yesterday. I thought he was staying here.'

'No; he was only here for the day. He comes to stay next week, I believe. Several visitors are coming then. I am rather sorry.'

Glyn thought he was, too, but, being a comparative stranger, he hardly liked to say so. They were sauntering back towards the house now.

'You like the quiet of this place?' he said.

'Yes. I like a few visitors, but not a great rush of them. We live so very quietly at home. When do you begin your portrait of Blanche?'

'As soon as my materials arrive, I suppose. I was to begin on Monday, but if they come sooner, there is no reason why I should not set to work.'

'I hope you will let me see it sometimes as it goes on.'

'Oh, by all means, if you promise not to criticise prematurely.'

'I should not be capable of doing that. I know nothing of drawing, though I should like it immensely, I am sure. We are so little in the way of art down here. I think it must be so delightful to be able to paint, or write, or do anything clever.'

'But you do play and sing,' answered Glyn. 'That was a very sweet song you sang last night.'

'Do you think so? I am so glad. They laugh at my attempts at home; my sister Lucy sings so much better. But, then, she has been a good deal in London, and has had lessons of a good master.'

'I think, after all, it depends more on feeling than lessons,' said Glyn. 'Of course a certain amount of instruction is desirable, but the best instruction is to hear good singers, just as the best instruction in painting is to see good pictures.'

'I have had no opportunity of hearing good singers, unfortunately.'

'But you have been in London?'

'Only once since I was quite a child, and then papa was ill and I had to attend to him a good deal. He went up to consult a physician. My uncle, Sir Percy, was abroad, and I knew very few people. Lucy has a lot of schoolfellows living in town, and she often stays with them.'

Glyn began to think Lucy must be a bit of a prig. 'I am glad Miss Sibyl has found her tongue, however,' he thought.

Being himself somewhat unversed in the ways of the world, he felt drawn towards this apparently unsophisticated girl, who possessed a simple beauty and a quiet grace which would have attracted most men. The meeting of last night certainly puzzled him, but it might be susceptible of an easy explanation, and it was clearly no business of his. They walked up and down the terrace chatting on all sorts of topics, until the breakfast-bell rang, and Miss Venables came to look for them. Glyn thought her more beautiful

under each new aspect, and, in truth, the cool white morning dress, with scarcely any adornment, did set off her graceful figure to perfection.

'What an example of early rising you have set us!' she said, as she kissed Sibyl and shook hands with Glyn. 'I have been watching you from my window for the last half-hour.'

'I don't know at what unearthly hour Miss Maitland made her appearance, for I found her here when I came down,' said Glyn, laughing.

'Why, Sib,' said her cousin, putting her arm round her waist, 'is your conscience uneasy that you are awake so early?'

Sibyl could not avoid the gaze that was fixed upon her, and her usually pale cheek went to the tint of the roses by her side. She blushed so painfully that Glyn, who could not help noticing it, turned aside and made some remark about the view.

'Yes, it is all very lovely,' said Blanche; 'but I'm sure the sight of the urn will be equally appreciated by two such early risers.

Papa will be impatient, too, so come along.'

Thereupon they went in to breakfast.

Mrs. Courtenay Byng and Captain D'Eyncourt were the delinquents, and had not yet appeared; but the former soon came in, radiant in a morning gown, with all sorts of fussy little points and bows and tricks about it. Captain D'Eyncourt came later, sauntering in with the air of a man who was insufferably bored at having to come to breakfast at all; though, when once fairly started, he managed to dispose of a fair quantity of grilled fowl, together with copious draughts of iced claret-and-water, averring, as he did so, that he could only indulge in a feeling of pity for those who were mad enough to take tea and coffee while the weather was so insufferably hot.

Glyn had a fair opportunity of observing him closely, as he was seated opposite. He was one of those not always agreeable specimens of the human race, a thoroughly handsome man. His face, indeed, as far as features and complexion were concerned,

was faultless. Hair and moustache black and in perfect condition ; dark searching eyes shaded by long lashes ; nose slightly aquiline, with a perfectly-shaped nostril ; fine ripe lips almost hidden by a full drooping moustache ; teeth as white as the table-cloth ; a rich colour in his cheeks, and a firm blue chin with a deep cleft in the centre which gave additional character to its massiveness. The weakness of the face was in the short upper lip, though this was hidden by the moustache. Through all the range of masculine genius there is hardly a man to be found with a short upper lip.

There is little doubt that a long upper lip is a sign of strength in woman as well, but certainly not of beauty ; and perhaps, after all, if woman's intellect is to run rampant, as it has done of late, men will begin to think (which the sensible ones have not done heretofore) that beauty without brains is a far more desirable thing than brains without beauty.

D'Eyncourt was a man of about five-and-thirty, though he still affected quite a juvenile

attire. He was clad in a check suit of faultless cut, wore a collar very open at the neck, and had an easy lounging way with him which indicated perfect satisfaction with himself. Altogether Glyn was not prepossessed; but then, possibly, he might have set up his bristles against any man, not a relation, who called Miss Venables 'Blanche,' as D'Eyncourt did. The fact is, Glyn envied him, and envy is a devil's snare, and akin to hate.

'So you're going to be painted, Blanche,' said D'Eyncourt. 'How are you to be taken?'

He did not address the question to Glyn, as under the circumstances he might have done, so Glyn sat silent. Miss Venables put matters right, as was her wont.

'I shall leave that entirely to Mr. Beverley,' she said.

'Ah!' said the Captain, unabashed; 'I suppose you'll let us into the studio now and then, Mr. Beverley?'

'Not at first, I'm afraid,' said Glyn. 'Perhaps when the picture is fairly advanced——'

'And if you behave properly, and don't

poison us with your everlasting cigarettes,' struck in Miss Venables.

'What are your plans, Blanche?' the Baronet asked, when he had finished his tea.

'I have hardly thought about them,' Blanche answered. 'Are you inclined to ride, Laura?' she asked, turning to Mrs. Byng.

Now, the widow had made up her mind quite privately to another attack upon the inexperienced heart of Mr. Glyn Beverley, and for some reason or other she concluded he did not ride ; so she answered accordingly :

'No ; I think it will be much too hot, and I am feeling very tired to-day.'

'Then,' said Blanche, in the most provokingly ingenuous manner, 'if you don't mind, I will ride Saladin, and Mr. Beverley can have Polly. That is, if you would care to go,' she added, turning to Glyn.

'I should like it, of all things,' exclaimed Glyn. 'I have so few chances in London. I have not ridden for years, and I used to have so much of it in my younger days in the country.'

Now, these younger days meant the time when his father was alive. Later on his mother had been left alone to that task of never-ending anxiety, the bringing up of a large family, which in some marvellous manner, known only to mothers so situated, she had managed to accomplish on a sum which in these days would not suffice to pay an ordinary butcher's bill. But the family had dwindled ; sickness and disease, possibly accelerated by insufficent means, had reduced it to Glyn and one sister. Whereupon the widow, instead of increasing her own comforts, still practised that system of self-denial for the sake of her children which alone should win her a place among the angels. She pinched herself to get instruction in music for her daughter, and to keep Glyn going through his artistic studies, seeing that his talent was great and his application incessant. She might have put him in an office at two pounds a week, but she preferred to stint herself and see him a great man, and now she was beginning to reap her reward.

It so happened that Saladin, to whom

Blanche Venables had referred, was a very favourite mount of Mrs. Byng's, so easy in its action and so lamb-like in temper that it was the only horse that fair dame cared to ride. Polly was Blanche's special property. Not one of your slim, spider-like Park hacks, but a shapely brown mare with bone and breed combined, and well up to even Glyn's weight, so that Blanche was a mere feather on its back, which fact enabled them together to perform almost incredible feats.

Blanche turned somewhat coldly to the Captain.

'You will go?' she said.

'Yes, certainly, if you do!' he answered.

'And Sib, you will take Lurline as usual, I suppose?'

'Thanks. Lurline is my favourite,' said Miss Maitland.

'You look like a couple of sylphs, I must say,' pursued Blanche. 'Lurline is so marvellously like an antelope that I should doubt if she could carry anyone a pound heavier than yourself.'

'Then you and I will have to entertain

each other, Mrs. Byng,' said the Baronet, with a smile.

'So it seems,' the widow responded, with visible chagrin.

'I've brought Kitty,' D'Eyncourt quietly remarked.

'Brought Kitty?' exclaimed everybody.

Glyn wondered who on earth 'Kitty' was, that she should cause such general astonishment.

'Indeed I have.'

'But you don't mean to ride her?' said the Baronet, still staring hard at the Captain.

'Indeed I do. I rode her here last night, and I don't see why I shouldn't ride her this morning.'

'You certainly want to break your neck,' said the Baronet decisively.

'You'll be killed before our very eyes,' said Blanche.

'Simple madness,' said Mrs. Byng.

Sibyl said nothing, but sat attentively regarding the worked corner of her pocket-handkerchief and looking pale.

Glyn requested to be enlightened as to the

peculiar nature of the Kitty in question, since she had caused such perturbation of spirit.

'Well, she's a chestnut mare of mine,' said the Captain, 'and is responsible for three broken collar-bones, a broken leg, and a dislocated shoulder, since I have had her. How many people she killed or maimed before, I wouldn't venture to say, but I should think their name is legion. She came to me with about as bad a character as a four-legged brute could possess, and she has maintained it.'

'But why on earth did you buy her?' asked Glyn.

'Because I've rather a fancy for subduing things in general, especially when they oppose me. I've had my own way with Kitty hitherto, and I mean to keep it.'

The Captain set his lips with a look that was not pleasant to behold.

Glyn observed him closely. 'I should not like to have that man for an enemy,' he thought.

CHAPTER VI.

CHIROMANCY.

'You would like to look round and select a room to paint in, would you not?' said the Baronet, as they rose from the breakfast-table.

'Thanks,' answered Glyn. 'I suppose we shall not be starting just yet,' he added, looking at Miss Venables.

'No, not for an hour at least. I have some things I must attend to first,' said Blanche. 'Laura, you know the house well; I depute you to take Mr. Beverley round, and let him see the rooms.'

'I shall want a northerly aspect, if possible,' said Glyn.

'Then the room next the library would be

a good one; but you can choose whichever you like.'

'Come along, Mr. Beverley,' said the widow, who was evidently not disinclined for the task; 'I will show you all round.'

They crossed the hall, where the sunlight was streaming in through the open doors.

'How lovely it is!' said the widow; 'I quite envy you your ride. It is too bad to leave me all alone.'

'But I understood you declined coming,' said Glyn.

'I thought some of you would remain at home,' answered the widow, with a little pout. 'However, I dare say I can amuse myself. Now, would this room do?' she asked. 'It has a nice dark paper, and that you like, don't you?'

'Not always. I think it best to keep ladies' portraits rather light in tone, as a rule. It is a high window, though, and the light is good. I fancy this room will do very well.'

'And you will want a cloth halfway up the window, and something in the way of

a throne, won't you? You see, I know all about it.'

'I don't have the cloth too high. I want more of a diffused light. We don't go in for the black shadow under the nose and that sort of thing nowadays. That was a very funny system which the old painters pursued. They used to paint quite black shadows on the face, and then put a landscape background, the two things being utterly incongruous.'

'In what way?'

'Why, you never get black shadows on the face out of doors; there are too many reflected lights. You only get them when a room is darkened and the light comes from one direction.'

'I see,' said Mrs. Byng, throwing herself languidly into an easy-chair, and turning melting eyes on the artist. 'Dear me! how hot it is! Don't you think a turn on the terrace would be nice?'

'If you like. This room will do very well to paint in. We need not bother any more about that now.'

'*Allons*, then. We can go through the window of the next room. It is shorter.'

She led the way, followed by Glyn. As they approached the window leading to the terrace, she stopped.

'Sib and the Captain are there already. A case of the spider and the fly,' she said.

There was a touch almost of malice in her tone. Glyn could not help smiling.

'Rather severe, Mrs. Byng,' he said.

'Not a bit more than the occasion calls for. He is like a certain gentleman not to be named, seeking whom he may devour.'

'You don't like him?'

The widow turned upon him suddenly, the look of spite still in her face.

'Do you?' she asked.

The question came so quickly that Glyn was taken aback. He was not prepared to criticise the guests at Lupton the day after his arrival. Still, he felt bound to be honest.

'I am not particularly impressed, I admit; still, I know so little of him that it is hardly fair to give an opinion; he may be an awfully good fellow, for anything I know.'

'He *may*,' said the widow, with still the little spiteful emphasis. 'Shall we join them, or would you rather not spoil their *tête-à-tête* ?'

'Just as you please. You are my cicerone, you know.'

They descended the few steps to the terrace. As they did so, D'Eyncourt and his companion sat down side by side on a garden-seat. The Captain put out his hand palm upwards, and Sib, with her slender forefinger, appeared to be tracing certain lines upon it.

The widow ran forward quickly.

'Why, Sib, what are you about ?' she said.

Sib started slightly as she heard the widow's voice, and withdrew her hand quickly.

'Only telling Captain D'Eyncourt what you told me,' she answered in some confusion.

'How can you be so foolish !' answered the widow, looking somewhat confused herself.

'Why, you told me you believed in it,' said Sib.

'Nonsense, child! I told you nothing of the sort,' answered the widow.

'What is it—palmistry?' said Glyn, laughing. 'Everybody must believe in that, of course. It's as true as astrology, or alchemy, or spiritualism.'

'And you don't believe in any of them I can see,' said the widow. 'But do you know anything about the hand?'

'Well, as an artist I ought to.'

'Oh yes, that of course; but I mean about the lines?'

'Yes; I believe I know all the jargon: the line of life, the line of head, the line of heart, the mounts of Jupiter, Saturn, Apollo, and Venus, etc. But what really amuses me is the intense conviction of the old writers on the subject. They, at any rate, were thoroughly in earnest.'

'I suppose the old astrologers had just as strong a conviction, and certainly the spiritualists of the present day have,' said D'Eyncourt.

They were all standing together now, and

at this moment Miss Venables came towards them from the drawing-room.

'What is this solemn conclave about?' she exclaimed as she drew near.

'A discussion of the deepest importance,' said the widow. 'Mr. Beverley is great at palmistry. He knows all the lines and mounts, and believes in it firmly.'

'That is a decided libel, Mrs. Byng,' said Beverley.

'Well, we will put him to the test, then,' said Miss Venables. 'He shall read our fortunes. Come, Captain D'Eyncourt, put out your hand.'

'By all means. I have been such an unlucky dog hitherto, that if Mr. Beverley prognosticates any good luck in the future, I shall be infinitely obliged to him.

Glyn thought the joke had gone far enough.

'I'm afraid I cannot undertake the *rôle* of a prophet,' he said, turning away.

'Oh, you can't get out of it that way!' said the widow. 'You said you knew the lines; come, Captain D'Eyncourt, put out your hand.'

'Certainly; I am most anxious to know my fate.'

Glyn glanced at his outstretched hand a moment, and his attention seemed suddenly arrested.

'Well, that is rather odd,' he said.

'What is?' asked the Captain.

'Well, if I believed in it for one moment, I should hesitate to tell you. But as I don't, I may point out that your line of life ends somewhat abruptly. Unusually so, in fact.'

'And what does that mean?'

'Why, by all the rules of palmistry, it means that you will come to a violent end; but I don't think you need distress yourself,' Glyn added, laughing.

'I don't mean to,' said the Captain, 'though I dare say it is what I deserve. But is it not time for us to be starting? We shall lose the best of the morning.'

'I think it is time we got into our habits,' said Miss Venables. 'The horses will be round in ten minutes.'

They turned towards the house, Miss

Venables leading the way. Sib Maitland lingered behind by the side of Glyn.

'You don't really believe in it, do you, Mr. Beverley?' she said in a low tone.

'Believe in it! no, of course not. How can the lines of the hand possibly foretell the future? You may as well believe that the stars can. Of course, certain hands go with certain temperaments, and therefore the hand is to some extent an index of character, but not of the future. It is sheer nonsense.'

'I am glad you think so, but Mrs. Byng told me she did believe in it, and showed me the lines.'

'I fancy Mrs. Byng may have taken it up like any other fad, *pour passer le temps*. She will get some other belief before long, and forget all about this.'

'You have not much faith in her, evidently.'

'I don't say that. She is very amusing and very good-natured; but I should say her fancies are like the man's sweethearts in the song, "The youngest and the newest is the dearest of them all."'

CHAPTER VII.

KITTY.

A QUARTER of an hour later there was a grand trampling in the drive in front of the hall-door as the grooms brought round the horses.

Lurline and Saladin came first, the former with long sloping fetlocks and a step as light as a fawn. Not much to look at in the way of strength, certainly, but a pretty graceful hack for a light-weight. Saladin was a model of an Arab, with the long, curved neck, hollow back, and square haunch, peculiar to that breed. Cream-white, also, from nose to heel, and with mane and tail like white floss silk. Polly, already described, came next, with fine points and showy action, a safe

three hundred pounds whenever you liked to put her in the market. And then, with a stableman on each side of her, came Kitty.

To look at her, you would have said she was as quiet as a lamb. The presence of two men seemed a farce, but her well-known qualities caused her to be held in respect, and to be waited on by a large retinue of anxious attendants. She was in colour bright chestnut, had a long, easy stride, throwing her feet well out, and bringing them down firmly from the full stretch. She kept her head down pertinaciously, showing the fine curve of her neck. The only evidence of restlessness about her at present was the quick champing of her snaffle, which went on incessantly.

'I think you had better mount and get away, and leave me a clear space and no favour,' said D'Eyncourt. 'There's no saying where my lady may go in the first five minutes. She took a standing jump over the gate of the drive at Oaklands last week while the groom who rode her was trying to open it. It measured four feet

eleven perpendicular. The man gave me warning next day.'

So the ladies and Glyn mounted and got away, but curiosity was aroused, and fifty yards off they stopped to look.

Kitty was still head down at the hall-door, with a man on each side. Except for the champing, she was as motionless as a rock; but out of the corner of her eye she was regarding the Captain carefully.

The man on the off-side held down one stirrup, while the Captain laid a hand on Kitty's mane and lifted his foot to the other.

As his toe touched the iron, it seemed to send an electric thrill through the mare. She went straight up on end without a moment's warning, the two men hanging on to her like grim death. Fighting out wildly with her fore-legs, she turned as on a pivot, and came down again the other way, leaving her foes baffled and discomfited.

They coaxed her round again, and again the performance was gone through, as if it were a rehearsal for a pantomime.

'Confound the brute! when she begins

this game she keeps it up for an hour,' said the Captain. 'Bring her close to the step.'

Kitty did not object to this. From his more commanding position the Captain again gathered the reins in his hand, and clutched the mare's mane. This time he was too quick for her, for in an instant he was in the saddle.

The spectators trembled, the grooms flew on one side; but you never knew how to meet Kitty's freaks. Widening her fore-feet, she planted them in front of her as firmly as two young oak-trees, and so stood stock still, the champ, champ, champ, still going on as if nothing had happened.

There stood Kitty, and there sat the Captain, looking the picture of patience, but wondering much what was to be the next move. It was a somewhat ridiculous position. Strong measures might have proved fatal, and even conciliatory ones must not be tried yet. Something, however, must be done, so, squaring his reins, he touched the mare lightly with his heels. The champ, champ,

stopped for a moment, and then went on as before, but nothing else happened.

D'Eyncourt had any amount of patience with a horse—a great quality in a rider—but he was keeping the others waiting, and this farce must be ended somehow. He must risk strong measures, after all, so, raising his hunting-crop quickly, he brought it down with a smart stroke on the mare's flank.

If a volcano had opened at her feet, the effect could not have been greater. The mare gave a single bound half across the sweep, and then dashed straight away down the drive at a mad gallop, going like the wind past Blanche and her party, and disappearing round the bend by some beeches in two seconds.

'What madness it is to ride such a creature!' said Blanche, as they followed on quickly. 'There she goes, I declare, straight across the park!'

And at that moment D'Eyncourt came into sight half a mile off, going across the smooth turf like the wind. The startled

deer fled from his path, the wind hissed past his ears, the ground seemed to fly from under him. Edging gradually away to the right with so gentle a pressure that Kitty, wily as she was, hardly suspected it, D'Eyncourt brought her gradually round towards the drive, and presently came up, Kitty one lather of sweat, and still tugging like a demon at the bridle.

'Not bad for a beginning, was it?' said the Captain with a laugh; 'but I think I've got my lady in hand now.'

'I hope so,' said Blanche; 'for if she intends to keep up that game all day, I don't see the use of your coming with us.'

'Oh, she'll go quietly enough now,' rejoined the Captain, edging up beside Blanche.

'I want you to take Sibyl under your wing,' said Blanche. 'Mr. Beverley is to be my *preux chevalier* to-day. I am anxious to show him the views.'

'Then, you had better drop behind,' answered the Captain, looking anything but pleased. 'Kitty has a most distinct objec-

tion to keeping in the rear, and now that she is behaving respectably, we had better humour her.'

So Blanche fell back to where Glyn was riding with Miss Maitland, and that young lady was ordered to the front, and Glyn's temper was evidently improved by the arrangement.

'A magnificent rider!' said Glyn, with his eyes still upon the Captain.

'Yes, he does everything well,' answered Blanche. 'He is one of the cleverest men I know.'

Glyn felt another twinge of envy.

'I suppose he has seen and done most things,' he answered.

'Oh yes. There is nothing he has not seen or done.'

'Has he left the service?'

'Yes. He was in the Carabineers, but sold out four years ago, when his father died. He has enough to live upon, and has expectations from an uncle, a Mr. Dalrymple, I believe.'

Fields, trees and hedges were passed in

rapid succession. The fresh sunny air and the cool breeze from off the distant sea sent the colour mantling into the face of Glyn's companion. The impudent breeze, indeed, sported with her hair, and sent it in pretty little waves about her eyes and forehead. The rapid motion and the bright morning seemed to transfigure Blanche. The sober, subdued look of home gave way to the sparkling sunny smile she had worn when Glyn first saw her in the wood. 'Only the day before yesterday,' he mused, 'and yet it seems an age. So many events are crowded into the time—such new thoughts and hopes—that I cannot believe it is only two days.'

They were increasing their pace, for the others had gone on ahead. The rapid motion exhilarated like champagne. Their horses seemed to share the excitement. Even the staid Saladin was deporting himself in a manner quite unworthy of the gravity of the great Eastern potentate whose name he bore; and as to Polly, she was throwing the foam-flakes from her bit and

springing through the air with a lightness which sent a feeling of buoyancy to the very heart of her rider.

They kept this up for some two or three miles, the glow deepening in Blanche's cheek, the smile on her lips and in her eyes brightening to absolute sunshine, and the breeze taking positive liberties with her luxuriant hair.

Presently they espied D'Eyncourt and Miss Maitland away to the left, riding slowly up a shoulder of the Downs that shut them out from the sea. Glyn and his companion left the road, and, putting their horses into a canter across the springing turf, soon came up with them.

'Where are you going, Captain D'Eyncourt?' asked Blanche, as they fell into line on the hillside.

'We thought of striking across this hill and getting down to the beach. Have you any objection?'

'None whatever. I should like it, and Mr. Beverley will enjoy a breath of the sea.'

The Captain was evidently not in a good temper yet.

'Shall we get on again, Miss Maitland?' he asked.

'Yes, if you like,' the girl answered in her quiet tones, and so, the slope being easier, they went on at a canter, while Glyn and Miss Venables again fell into the rear.

The soft carpet of herbage, upon which their horses' hoofs fell with the faintest possible sound; the pretty wild-flowers of purple and gold and blue which studded the thymy turf; the bright sunshine, the purple cloud shadows which met them on their way, the strip of pure blue sea which now opened to the right as they neared the crest of the Downs, and that everlasting chorister, the lark, whose song of praise goes up at morn and noon and dewy eve—what more was wanting, with such a companion by his side, to fill Glyn's cup of happiness to the brim?

Presently they left the Downs and came upon the sea-shore. The waves were rolling in over the flat sands in long, even bars of white foam, and with a ceaseless, mono-

tonous musical murmur — the result, as Tyndall tells us, of the bursting of innumerable air-bubbles. The sea-breeze, with nothing to intercept it, brought its fresh, salt flavour to their lips, and came as a pleasant antidote to the beams of noon which were now beating fiercely on the yellow sands and on the low, grassy flats, where red cattle grazed, or floundered in the cooling dykes, switching the flies from their tortured flanks and tossing them in myriads from their restless heads.

The tide was low, and they rode far out on to the sands among the tide-pools bordered with slippery green rocks. Stray starfish lay flabby and helpless in the sun. Wandering crabs skittered off at their approach, and, seeking the nearest pool, indulged in the pleasure and protection of self-inhumation in the soft sand of the bottom.

Glyn seemed to think a new world of rapture was opening before him; but great happiness is sometimes rudely dashed, as it was at this moment by the Captain. He and Miss Maitland had somehow fallen

behind. He now came riding up, and edged in unceremoniously between Glyn and Miss Venables.

'I want to tell you about the Fortescues, Blanche. You know I was at Edith's wedding.'

Blanche didn't appear particularly anxious to hear the intelligence, but without positive rudeness she could not decline. Miss Maitland was alone in the rear, so Glyn was constrained to fall back upon that young lady.

'What a charming ride, Miss Maitland! is it not?'

'Yes; but I am rather tired, and are we not going a very long way?'

'Do you think so? It had not occurred to me. I suppose we are in Miss Venables' hands with respect to distance?'

'Oh! but she can ride any number of miles without fatigue. It is quite wonderful to see her follow the hounds on Polly. But please don't say I said so.'

'Why not?'

'Oh, I don't know. She doesn't quite

like to get a reputation for riding across country, although she does it so well.'

D'Eyncourt rode on beside Blanche.

'Do you intend to keep me at arm's length all day?' he asked.

'I must be polite to strangers.'

'Who is this young fellow? You picked him up in the woods, didn't you?'

'Yes; we picked him up in the woods.'

'Do you know anything about him?'

'Only that he is clever and agreeable. We don't usually inquire into an artist's pedigree. Talent is their passport to society; to my thinking, a better one than that of birth.'

They were nearing the waves. D'Eyncourt had become forgetful of the tricky nature of his mare, she had been going so quietly; but Kitty's was a nature which regarded every novelty as an offence, and she was eyeing the circling foam-wreaths, which came almost up to her feet, with some disfavour. D'Eyncourt took up his companion's last remark.

'Eccentric as usual,' he said.

'If you choose to think so,' Blanche answered; 'but in this case I am *not*, even from your point of view. Mr. Beverley's mother was a Glyn. The Glyns were acquaintances of my father—a very good family indeed.'

'And you intend to shut yourself up with him all day? Quiet, you brute!' he exclaimed angrily, as Kitty swerved from an encroaching wave.

Kitty's pricked ear went backwards, as if checking off the insult, and treasuring it up for the future. But she took no further notice.

'As far as may be necessary,' Blanche answered quietly; 'but,' she added, 'I should think that can be but of little consequence to you.'

'You think so?'

'I *hope* so. You remember the conditions of your return.'

'I do; but I had hoped that time would have somewhat modified those conditions.'

'Time will never modify them!' Blanche answered, in a determined tone.

Kitty swerved again. A dark look flitted across D'Eyncourt's face, and, with a muttered imprecation, he brought his cane down heavily on her shoulder.

The mare fairly uttered a scream. She went straight up on end, without an instant's warning, toppled, and came down heavily backwards, with the Captain underneath.

Miss Maitland and Glyn were fifty yards behind. He was hastening forward to the rescue, when he heard a low cry by his side, and turned, to see his companion looking as white as a sheet and evidently about to fall.

He sprang from his saddle, and caught her as she fell towards him. She gave one scared look at the prostrate form of D'Eyncourt, and then consciousness passed away, and she lay fainting in Glyn's arms.

CHAPTER VIII.

BLANCHE TO THE RESCUE.

HERE was a pretty kettle of fish! Imagine the *mise-en-scène!* D'Eyncourt flat on his back on the sands, with Kitty struggling and kicking over him, and trying to get on her legs. Miss Venables, transfixed with horror, on the back of Saladin, who was sniffing at his fallen companion. Polly and Lurline, free as the winds, trotting round with heads high in air and snorts of astonishment. Glyn supporting Miss Maitland's head as she lay stretched on the sand, and the creeping waves coming on with stealthy, relentless footsteps, up towards the very spot where these luckless ones lay.

Glyn did not waste much time over his

fair burden, however. A faint, even at its worst, is not to be named in the same day with a man with a horse on the top of him.

Laying Miss Maitland on the sands, he hastened to D'Eyncourt, who remained so perfectly motionless that Glyn thought he must be dead. Miss Venables had sprung to the ground, and, although she also looked white and scared, she did not lose her presence of mind, but hastened with Glyn to the Captain's side. Kitty was up again by this time, and was putting the breadth of the sands between herself and the rest of the party with all convenient speed, lashing out at intervals as an intimation that it would be advisable to let her alone.

'Surely he is not dead!' gasped Blanche, in a horrified whisper, as she knelt beside the Captain on the sand.

Glyn placed his hand over D'Eyncourt's heart.

'I trust not,' he answered. 'He is terribly hurt, but there is life in him still. What on earth is to be done? The tide is close upon us, and is coming in like a sluice. I could

manage one, but there is Miss Maitland. Stay, though,' he added; 'she is so light that I think I can manage to carry her to the beach, and still be back before the tide reaches us.'

He lifted Sibyl's light form in his arms, and hurried with her across the sands. Depositing her by the side of a little rill which ran down among the shingle, he sprinkled some water on her face. Signs of returning animation began to appear. Glyn, however, had no time to lose. He hurried back as fast as possible.

Blanche had found a pool in the sands, and was moistening D'Eyncourt's face with her wetted handkerchief.

Even in this emergency, Glyn could not but admire the wonderful calmness of the girl under such exceptionally trying circumstances. He could see, moreover, that it was not the calmness of indifference, for varying emotions were flitting over her face, and her hand trembled in her self-imposed task. It was the strength arising from a strong sense of duty.

'Isn't it possible to utilize Polly in carrying him up?' she asked.

'I couldn't possibly mount with him in my arms, and it would injure him to put him up alone. There is nothing for it but to carry him.'

'But it is such a terrible distance.'

'That cannot be helped. I must do the best I can, and at once.'

Without another word Glyn lifted the Captain bodily. Strong as he was, it was as much as he could accomplish, and after staggering a few yards only he was compelled to stop.

As he did so, he heard a cry from Blanche, and looked round. She was pointing with a look of terror in her face towards the land.

Glyn followed the direction of her hand, and saw a sight which filled him almost with despair.

The portion of the sand he was on was raised—a sort of rounded ridge—and between it and the beach a long line of water was coming rapidly in from the sea, forming a

shining barrier, which cut him off from his goal.

He turned to look at his companion. She had recovered her presence of mind.

'Can you help me to mount Polly?' she said. 'There is nothing for it but to get help.'

'But you cannot ride on a man's saddle,' Glyn answered.

'Oh yes, when I am once seated. Help me up quickly.'

Glyn lifted her into the saddle, and the next moment she was going across the sands at full speed.

Glyn glanced round. The tide was close upon him now, and the channel near the shore was rapidly widening. Immediate action was imperative.

Lifting his helpless burthen again, he struggled in desperation towards the line of water. In a few minutes he was at the brink, but the incoming tide was loosening the sand. His feet slipped, he floundered about in the water and nearly fell.

'I must give it up,' he said. 'What is to

be done? Will she get help in time? I cannot leave him here to drown.'

He heard a cry, and looked up. There was Miss Venables riding back as fast as she had gone, and behind her was a man in a cart coming over the flats beyond the beach as fast as the horse could trot.

'Thank God!' cried Glyn with a mighty sensation of relief. 'Her presence of mind has saved us.'

She came bounding and splashing through the water, and the next moment was beside him, all flushed with the unwonted exertion and the painful excitement.

'Thank Heaven! I saw the cart the moment I got across the sands. I do hope we are safe now; that is, if he is——'

She stopped suddenly and looked at the lifeless form which Glyn was supporting in his arms. A shudder seemed to pass over her.

'Do not distress yourself,' Glyn said hastily. 'He is alive beyond doubt.'

In a minute or two the cart came up. Luckily it was an empty one, with only some

straw and a sack or two in the bottom. With the assistance of the man, Glyn lifted the Captain into it and laid him on the straw. Then he got in himself and was taken across the channel on to the higher ground, Blanche following on Polly.

Now that she had accomplished her task, she showed some signs of giving way. The strain had been such as few women could have borne. Luckily, they found Saladin grazing quietly on the short herbage at the top of the sands. Glyn quickly transferred Miss Venables to her own steed, while he himself went off on Polly to look after Sib Maitland.

He found that young lady sitting up on the slope of the beach in a state of great perturbation, and as yet unable to move. As soon as she saw Glyn she made an effort to rise, but he begged her to keep still.

'Oh, Mr. Beverley! what has happened?' she cried as he approached. 'It is all too dreadful! Is he alive?

'Yes,' answered Glyn confidently; 'perhaps he is not so much hurt, after all. He is snug in a cart now. Don't alarm yourself.'

'It is so dreadfully foolish of me,' Sibyl went on, 'but I never could bear to see an accident.'

'Did you notice which way Lurline went?' said Glyn, to divert her thoughts.

'I have not an idea. I feel quite bewildered,' said Sib, shuddering again at the bare remembrance of the scene.

'Then, I think you had better mount Polly, if you can ride on this saddle,' Glyn said, springing to the ground. 'The man tells me there is an inn over yonder. We can all go to it until we can get help and catch the horses.'

'Oh no, I can walk quite well now. Don't mind me. Do get assistance for Captain D'Eyncourt as soon as possible. I shall be so distressed if I delay you. I will follow you.'

Glyn thought it might be as well for her not to see the Captain in his present plight.

'Are you quite sure you can come alone?' he asked.

'Yes, quite sure. Do go on; I am sure you must be wanted.'

Glyn thought so too, so he hastened back to the cart, which was now crossing the flats to the little inn. He found Blanche had gone on to prepare for their arrival.

Very soon they had D'Eyncourt on an old-fashioned sofa in the inn's best parlour, and a man was despatched on Polly for the nearest doctor. Before he arrived, however, the united exertions of Glyn and Miss Venables had brought the patient round. He opened his eyes, but closed them again with a spasm of pain.

'What on earth is the matter with me?' he said. 'This pain is horrible.'

Glyn was relieved. It was by no means the voice of a dying man, though he was evidently in great suffering. He put some brandy to his lips, begging him to lie quite still until the doctor came. Then Blanche went to the next room to see after Sib and to tell her that consciousness had returned, upon which Sib burst into tears, somewhat to Blanche's amazement.

In due course the doctor arrived and examined the patient. It was not a cheerful

report that he gave. There was a severe cut on the head, and an arm was broken, besides a fractured rib.

The doctor took Glyn outside.

'Moving him is out of the question. He must remain here. I will set the bones as soon as possible, and meanwhile you must keep him perfectly quiet.'

'Do you think him in danger?'

'Impossible to say at present. There may be internal injuries. There is dilatation of the pupils. He must have struck his head very severely in falling, but the effects may pass off. You must keep him perfectly quiet.'

'I will stay here with him.'

'That will be the best arrangement. I know the woman of the house. She is quite reliable, and will, I am sure, help you as much as possible. The ladies had better go home. It must have been a great shock to them.'

'It was indeed.'

'Well, I will return as soon as I can, and then we will make all snug.'

The doctor departed, and Glyn went to give the ladies his report. Presently the

man who had been sent to look for Lurline and Kitty returned with the former, but the latter was nowhere to be seen.

This was soon explained. Within two hours, to the amazement of everybody, a carriage arrived from Lupton, and Sir Percy was seen stepping out.

'What a merciful thing!' exclaimed Glyn when he saw the Baronet; 'but how on earth did he know about it?'

Kitty was not so mad as she seemed. She had taken the wisest course, and gone straight back to Lupton at full gallop, rousing all the villages and hamlets as she passed. On arriving at Lupton she galloped straight into the stableyard.

'Lord save us!' exclaimed the old coachman, who was lounging on a corn-chest. 'Somebody must be killed.'

He turned Kitty into a loose-box, and then went straight to the house, bouncing in upon Sir Percy and Mrs. Byng without ceremony, just as they were going to luncheon.

'What on earth is the matter?' cried Sir Percy, seeing the man's scared face.

'Don't know, Sir Percy, but something awful must ha' happened. Kitty has come back without the Captain, and all in a lather of sweat.'

'Good God!' exclaimed Sir Percy; 'I knew something dreadful would happen if he persisted in riding that brute! Why, he may have broken his neck!'

As the words passed his lips, Mrs. Courtenay Byng turned quite crimson, and then deadly pale. She moved away to hide her confusion, but quickly recovered herself.

'What shall you do?' she asked.

'Do? Start at once and see what it means. But where is one to go? They were going towards the beach, weren't they?'

'Yes; I heard them say they meant to go quite down to the sea. You will let me go with you?'

'Quite unnecessary, my dear. It will only complicate matters.'

'But I think I ought to go. I may be of use,' the widow answered anxiously. She seemed unusually disturbed. Sir Percy could not help noticing it.

'No, no, my dear. You are too much upset already, and no wonder. You will be more useful here in preparing for any emergency. The doctor ought to be sent for, too. Dear, dear! to think that people will be so idiotic! Let us hope, at least, that he is not killed!'

CHAPTER IX

THE PICTURE PROGRESSES.

Sir Percy hurried at once to the stables. There, sure enough, was Kitty, in the condition the man had described, but she was quietly munching some corn which a groom had given her. She turned a backward glance at him as he entered the stable, as if looking for his approval, and appeared quite innocent of the fact that she had been the prime mover in a catastrophe.

The Baronet ordered a close carriage at once, and within ten minutes he was on his way to the scene of the accident. There was no difficulty in finding out the direction in which to drive, for the excited groups of rustics, who had been aroused by Kitty's

wild career, were still assembled in the roads and hamlets, and were only too eager to point out the direction from which she came, so that the speed of the carriage was scarcely slackened until it arrived at the inn.

Sir Percy was, of course, greatly concerned on learning the state of affairs.

'I knew that brute would cause some horrible catastrophe,' he said. 'I was almost inclined to say it serves him right for riding her; but he always was as obstinate as a mule. I must get back at once, and send somebody to nurse him.'

So, seeing that he could do no good by staying, Sir Percy departed, taking Sibyl with him. She begged hard to be allowed to stay with Blanche, but this they would not hear of, as it would be only crowding the already limited space at their disposal.

Blanche was to remain until the nurse arrived, and Glyn had also announced his intention of remaining. The doctor had returned and set the broken bones, and made all snug; but although he was not particularly anxious about the patient, he

said it would be impossible to move him at present.

When the carriage arrived the second time with a nurse from the village, and all sorts of comforts from Lupton, Glyn begged Blanche to return home in it. To this, however, she would not at first consent, but, finding Glyn was resolved in any case to remain with D'Eyncourt, she at length yielded.

'I don't know how to thank you for all your kindness,' she said. 'Of course it will relieve our minds greatly to think he is in such good hands; but it is a melancholy commencement of your holiday.'

'If I only consulted my own feelings, I should stay,' said Glyn; 'and if it is a satisfaction to you, that is an additional inducement.'

He was beginning to feel that there was no sacrifice he would not make for this girl, who was herself so considerate to others; and as for Blanche, the liking she had felt for Glyn from the first was increased by the single-heartedness he had displayed in connection with this unfortunate event.

The accident had, of course, put Glyn on quite a different footing with the Venables. He had come only as an artist engaged to paint a portrait, but he had proved himself a friend in time of need, and they so regarded him. If it be true that one touch of Nature makes the whole world kin, certainly one touch of trouble does no less.

So when the nurse arrived, and Blanche had gone home, and the patient had been made snug for the night, Glyn sat down and smoked his pipe, with an indefinable sense of happiness which the situation hardly warranted. The circumstances were certainly not cheerful in themselves. There was no absolute certainty yet that a change for the worse might not take place in the condition of the injured man; and, apart from this, Glyn was compelled to pass the night in solitude at a little wayside inn, instead of enjoying another delightful evening at Lupton like the last. But the consciousness that he was relieving the mind of Miss Venables, and was at the same time doing a kindly act, gave him that sense of passive satisfac-

tion which is the next best thing to active delight.

He strolled out to the beach before going to bed, drawn thither by that curious craving we all have to revisit the scene of a catastrophe. But the tide was in now, and the long line of breakers came rolling in from their leagues and leagues of ocean wastes, moaning with that sad, unceasing moan which seems like a craving for human sympathy. There was a faint light in the eastern sky, a portent of the coming moon, and as Glyn gazed upon the cold waters and listened to their sad moan, a dark, pyramidal cloud suddenly rose up from the far horizon, snd seemed to him, in his perturbation of spirit, like an omen of evil fate. And then a audden thought struck him. The conversation on the terrace that morning, the light talk on the subject of palmistry, and his unthinking remark about D'Eyncourt's line of life, and the prognostication of his sudden death, it came back to him now with a veritable shock. He was not given to superstition, but this accident, coming as it

did so soon after the prediction, was, to say the least, a strange coincidence. Were the injuries more severe than the doctor imagined? And would the result prove fatal after all?

Glyn strove in vain to shake off the gloom that oppressed him at the bare suggestion of such a calamity. He retraced his steps to the house with increased anxiety, and eagerly inquired the latest news of the injured man. The nurse herself came to answer his inquiries. She reported that D'Eyncourt was sleeping so soundly that she had left him for a time to get her supper, and make arrangements for her night-watch, upon which Glyn shook off his fears and went to bed himself, and was soon wrapped in the slumber that comes from youth and health.

Three days after the accident, the doctor, to the surprise of everyone, pronounced D'Eyncourt sufficiently recovered to be removed to Lupton in a comfortable family carriage. He was decidedly better as to the head, and the doctor had discovered no further injuries beyond the broken bones.

'I think the brute's head must have hit mine a crack as she came down,' said D'Eyncourt, as Glyn was taking him to Lupton. 'Or it might have been the pommel of the saddle. I don't feel at all clear which it was, and it doesn't much matter now. It's lucky I'm alive at all. That is, if there is any luck in being alive. I'll tame that brute yet, though!' he added.

Glyn's traps arrived early the following week, and as he had made one or two preliminary sketches, he was soon fairly at work, with Blanche doing penance upon a deal case covered with a drugget, which served as a 'throne,' and Sibyl sitting by with her work, and now and then stealing sly glances at the picture, in spite of prohibitions to the contrary.

'Why won't you let people look at the picture at the commencement?' asked Sibyl, as Glyn went on painting.

'Because they make such odd remarks,' said Glyn. 'They can't help criticising, and criticism at the outset is absurd. Of course people who have a practical knowledge of

painting don't criticise, as they understand what is to be done.'

'But why do you notice the criticisms of the ignorant?' asked Blanche.

'One tries not to,' said Glyn, 'but the remarks dwell in the mind, and one is almost unconsciously influenced, and then it interferes with one's own conception. Besides, you have no idea what absurd things happen. I was once painting a certain noble lord, and when the face was fairly advanced, I just rubbed in the figure and background with brown paint to cover the canvas. A friend of my sitter came to see the portrait, and I was foolish enough to show it to her, at the same time impressing upon her that it was only just begun. In spite of this, she wrote to the family to say I was painting his lordship in a brown coat, with a brown background. As he never wore a brown coat, you may imagine their consternation.'

'How utterly absurd of her!' said Blanche.

'Yes; and what made it more absurd was that she was supposed to be something of an art critic, but of course she could not have

had even the most rudimentary knowledge of art. On another occasion, I remember I had just rubbed in some paint to mark where the hands were to come; they were absolutely without form, but a visitor who was looking at the picture said, "I suppose you will do a little more to those hands, Mr. Beverley." I really could hardly help laughing in his face.'

'I confess I don't wonder at your not showing your pictures under such circumstances,' said Blanche. 'But I hope Sib and I would not be so foolish.'

'For that reason, I intend showing your picture to you before long,' answered Glyn. 'By the way,' he added, after a pause, 'I was going to ask you what has become of Mrs. Courtenay Byng? In the commotion last week I forgot to inquire for her.'

'I suppose she has a wholesome horror of anything "dreadful,"' answered Blanche, 'and fled at the very first intimation of the accident. She will be back this week, I believe; that is, if Captain D'Eyncourt is better. Have you seen him this morning?'

'Yes, I was with him half an hour ago. He is getting on fast. The doctor says he may come down to-morrow, though of course he will carry his arm in a sling for weeks. By the way, he told me to thank you for the flowers, Miss Maitland.'

'What! have you been indulging in early rambles again, Sib?' asked Miss Venables, turning her eyes towards her cousin.

'Yes. The roses looked so fresh this morning that—that I thought they would be especially refreshing to our invalid,' said Sibyl hesitatingly.

Miss Venables was silent for a few minutes, and then made a remark on some other subject. Glyn went on painting.

'Mrs. Byng seems to lead a sort of butterfly life, "flitting for ever from flower to flower,"' he said.

'Yes. But, then, she has a good income, and literally nothing to do but to amuse herself. No cares or responsibilities of any kind.' Then, after a pause, she added: 'You must make the most of me in the next few days, Mr. Beverley. We shall not have

so much quiet time after Thursday, as we have visitors coming. I shall only be able to give you two hours in the morning, I fear,' pursued Blanche.

'I must do the best I can,' answered Glyn with a sudden sense of disappointment.

'But you must come to my domain sometimes in the afternoon,' continued Blanche. 'Sibyl and I generally escape for an hour, and you promised us some reading, you know.'

'You may depend upon it I do not need a reminder,' said Glyn earnestly.

The Captain did not make his appearance for some days. Something in the nature of a relapse took place—feverish symptoms and general weakness. Glyn visited him once or twice a day, and naturally a kind of intimacy sprang up between them, though, as far as Glyn was concerned, it could hardly be said to ripen into a liking. Meanwhile he pushed on the picture, hour after hour, day after day, making the most of the quiet time, as Miss Venables had suggested, and looking forward with a considerable amount of dread to the

return of Mrs. Byng and Forbes, and to the advent of other visitors, whom he began respectively to regard as his natural enemies, inasmuch as they would rob him of some of those precious hours when Blanche sat before him in all her exquisite beauty, and the moments flew by laden with that mysterious, ineffable enchantment which comes with the dawn of love.

Those were dangerous hours. Sometimes by Blanche's request he would put aside his palette, and, taking a favourite book of poems, stroll with her and her cousin far out into the park, and, under the shade of some of those magnificent beeches, read to them a dreamy lay, or a stirring rhyme of the olden time, pregnant with love and doughty deeds.

Then came those long delicious hours in the summer twilight, when Blanche lingered over the piano, and Sibyl the silent sat with her embroidery, and Sir Percy slept the sleep of the man without a care, and Glyn hung entranced over the instrument, drinking in, still unconsciously, deep draughts of that delicious poison which too often results

in so much after-pain. Or the stroll out on to the terrace, when the moon came up full and round and red from behind the upland trees, whereon the sunset glow, or, rather, the after-glow, still lingered, and where the fitful voice of the last thrush was heard clear and full through the still, warm air. Priceless moments these! when the crimson turned to purple in the western sky, the purple to dun, the dun to gray, and the light died out, and the robe of night was drawn without a rustle over the sleeping woods that would not even wake to watch the flooded silver of the moon, but lay in dreamy, mistful calm from eve to dawn, without the stirring even of a leaf.

They were out on the lawn the night before the visitors were expected ; a nightingale was treating them to fitful bursts of melody, with periods of intense silence between, in which they hardly dared to move or speak lest they might disturb the warbler.

'I think the nightingale is a tantalizing bird, after all,' said Blanche. 'He gives you

little bits of melody so charming, that you positively crave for more, and then he suddenly breaks off and wearies you to death with desire.'

'You want half a dozen of them at once,' said Glyn.

'I don't know; half the charm is in the thought of the bird's solitude, or quietude, rather, for I suppose he has his mate. I wonder if he is really happy. His notes hardly convey that notion.'

'Christina Rossetti touches on that,' said Sibyl.

> '"I shall not hear the nightingale
> Sing on as if in pain."

Don't you remember, Blanche? in that pretty song you have.'

'Yes, I know,' Blanche answered musingly.

'I should doubt very much if he is unhappy,' said Glyn. 'I don't believe in any living thing singing when it is unhappy—not voluntarily, at least; not even the traditional swan.'

'What about Ophelia?'

'Oh, she was mad, so it was involuntary in her case.'

'And she went mad for love. Poor thing!' said Blanche.

'You are sceptical as to love's power in that respect,' said Glyn, detecting the tone of irony in her last words.

'Yes, I am. I don't believe it kills, and I don't believe it drives people mad, unless they have very weak minds to begin with. Possibly, though, a woman who loved very, very deeply might go mad—like Ophelia—under extreme circumstances. I don't know.'

'But not a man?'

'No—certainly not!'

'You believe a man incapable of loving very deeply?' said Glyn hurriedly.

'Yes; I believe a man incapable of loving *very* deeply,' Blanche answered.

She was seated on the branch of a beech which gave a long sweep from the parent stem almost to the ground, and then soared upwards again full of leafage. The chequered ivory light was playing on her

face and neck and bosom, for the night was sultry, and she had not cared to put on even a light shawl. With the least pressure of her foot on the ground, she was causing the branch to sway slightly up and down, and she continued the motion unconsciously as she talked.

'It is a hard opinion of our sex, Miss Venables,' pursued Glyn, who was standing in front of her.

'It is a true one, Mr. Beverley.'

'You may change your opinion one day.'

'I don't think it likely. It seems hard to you, no doubt, but even you may change your opinion of your own sex one day. Who knows? It is so true that "Man's love is of man's life a thing apart."'

'And it is "Woman's whole existence," you think?'

'I am not going to say what I think of my own sex. At least, you will admit that women are most constant.'

'I will not even admit that, and I don't agree with Coleridge in his notion that "Constancy lives in realms above."'

'Yet that was a man's idea.'

'An erroneous one!'

'A true one. Don't you agree with me, Sibyl?'

But Sibyl had disappeared.

CHAPTER X.

MORE VISITORS.

Miss Venables was a discreet young lady. The moment she found she was left alone with Glyn, she rose from her seat, shaking, as she did so, a hundred moonflakes from her head and shoulders. She emerged at once into the full moonlight.

'Where can she have gone?' she said. 'What a strange girl she is! She used not to be so dreamy and silent.'

'I don't think she is very far off,' answered Glyn. 'She has a favourite seat yonder—at least, I have found her there two or three times.'

He thought he might venture thus far without becoming a babbler. And yet it

troubled him to keep anything concealed from Miss Venables, for Glyn was as straightforward and honest as the day.

'Let us go there, then,' said Blanche, and with that they went to the beech grove, where they found Sibyl seated in her favourite spot.

She rose hastily as they approached. Even in the moonlight, Glyn discovered traces of tears in her eyes. She had turned her face away from her cousin, and Glyn, who was on the other side, could not avoid seeing it.

'Why, Sib, what an odd girl you are! Why did you desert us so suddenly?'

'I did not mean to desert you. I should probably have been back by the time you had finished your discussion. It was not one that interested me.'

Glyn tried to recall what they had been saying.

'Was there anything in that little discussion about constancy which had touched her home?' he asked himself. 'It was odd that she should have left them in the midst

of it to indulge in solitary tears. What did it all mean?'

His companions, like himself, seemed to have fallen into a reverie, and they returned to the drawing-room, where they found Sir Percy awake, and clamorous for tea.

The next day Forbes and Mrs. Courtenay Byng returned.

'You will find them great fun, Mr. Beverley,' said Blanche. 'You have not seen much of them together. She orders him about like a slave—indeed, she calls him Slave—and he is so good-natured he does everything she wishes, though I am sure it must try his patience sorely at times.'

Glyn found them all on the terrace when he left his painting-room that afternoon.

'And how is the picture getting on, Mr. Beverley?' asked Mrs. Byng. 'I suppose we are not allowed to have a peep yet.'

'Not yet, I think.'

'I am dying with curiosity. Slave, bring me that seat! Positively dying,' the widow added, as she sank into the garden-chair

Forbes brought her, and began fanning herself violently. 'How you manage to exist without a fan I cannot conceive, Blanche. You are the very oddest girl I know. You don't wear earrings, you never use a fan, and you never touch powder. Why, positively an Indian squaw lives a more artificial life than you do. She does paint, while you — I believe you would faint at the sight of rouge. I am not a bit ashamed to say it, for generally I have plenty of colour; but at a ball I should look perfectly hideous without it! As to powder, it is the greatest luxury in life. Slave!'

'Yes,' said Forbes, turning round from the position in which he was leaning against the stone balustrade of the terrace.

'You've been smoking.'

''Pon honour I haven't, not since lunch. You always allow me two or three pipes after breakfast, don't you know.'

He turned away again, giving a sly wink at Glyn as he did so. Mrs. Byng went on:

'And that should be quite enough to last you until the evening. I don't know what

you would do if you hadn't me to keep you in order. Your appearance now is evidence of the melancholy results of a dissipated life!'

There was a general laugh. Forbes was the most perfect picture of robust health it is possible to conceive. The widow flew off to another topic.

'Now, candidly, Mr. Beverley, don't you think I should make just as good a picture as Blanche?'

'I have no doubt you would make a very good picture indeed,' answered Glyn.

'That's not an answer! I ask you whether I should not make as good a picture as Blanche.'

'There are such different types of beauty, you know,' said Glyn, feeling he was being driven into a corner.

Blanche knew that he would not be allowed to escape. She just raised her eyes slightly, and watched him. She was one who judged character by little things, and little things are, in most cases, an infallible guide.

'As they say in court, give me a straight-

forward answer—yes or no,' pursued the widow.

'You really wish for my candid opinion?'

'Yes.'

'Then, I don't think you would.'

Blanche dropped her eyes.

'I like you for that, Mr. Beverley,' she said to herself.

'And now I suppose, Mrs. Byng, I have sacrificed my last chance of ever painting you,' said Glyn.

'Indeed, I am not such a goose as that!' answered the widow, whose vanity, nevertheless, was a little ruffled. 'Perhaps, after all, I only did it to try you. Men are such humbugs, and artists are always flatterers!'

'Not always,' Blanche said quietly.

'Well, perhaps not quite always. We have a rare exception amongst us now. But you are a very bold man; I might have been very angry with you. As it is, I am not at all sure I shall not ask you to paint me one of these days. Only I have no one to give the picture to.'

'I shall be charmed to have it,' said Blanche.

'So you shall, if I remain an unhappy widow. But I may astonish you all by taking to myself a husband one of these fine mornings. What should you say to that, Slave?'

'That there would be several suicides among our sex on the same day,' said Forbes, with another sly look at Glyn. 'Existence is bad enough as it is, don't you know, but with Mrs. Courtenay Byng married, it would be simply unendurable!'

They all opened their eyes.

'Why, Mr. Forbes!' laughed Blanche, 'I haven't heard you make such a long speech for years.'

'He must be going into Parliament,' said the widow.

'And what makes existence so hard to you?' asked Sibyl, who looked brighter than usual.

'What? Everything!' said Forbes emphatically. 'Why, take dressing alone. It's perfectly awful to think you have to put on

your clothes every morning merely to take them off again at night, and that this goes on day after day, year after year. What was that story of the man who committed suicide solely in consequence of it? He left a paper to say he had dressed and undressed for thirty years, and he positively could not stand it any longer, don't you know.'

'Oh! he *must* be going in for the family seat. Which shall you be, Tory or Radical, Slave?'

'I haven't quite made up my mind. It's too much trouble to make up your mind this hot weather, don't you know. Then as to ties. What you have to go through on the subject of ties alone is simply awful! It almost drives you to knock off ties altogether and wear a beard a yard long.'

D'Eyncourt's sister, a still good-looking woman of forty, was at dinner that day. She had returned from abroad when she heard of the accident. Then there was Lord Merton, a very red-haired young man, with a glass always in one eye, and an

utterly helpless expression if by chance it tumbled out for a moment. Then there were the Vicar and his wife and the curate so that quite a respectable party surrounded the festal board.

When Sir Percy and the Vicar got together, they were rather longer than usual over their wine, having many matters to discuss. Forbes went to sleep in his chair, and Glyn became dreadfully impatient. At length the discussion about parish matters came to a close, and Forbes woke up and tried to look as if he had not been asleep, and said 'Eh?' as if someone had put a question to him. Then they all went towards the drawing-room, and in the hall they encountered D'Eyncourt, leaning on the arm of a servant, and going in the same direction.

'Glad to see you down, D'Eyncourt,' said Sir Percy. 'Feel better?'

'Yes, thanks. Rather groggy about the knees.'

'Take my advice, and don't ride that brute any more.'

'We'll see about that by-and-by,' said the Captain.

Glyn was a discontented man that night. There was a buzz of conversation all over the drawing-room. There was no hanging over the piano in the quiet twilight hours, no cosy tea-table with Blanche dispensing the beverage with her own fair hands. They were invaded by an army of powdered servants with trays, and the songs that were sung were feebly heard amid the prattle of many tongues.

Glyn had rather taken to Mrs. Harrington —D'Eyncourt's sister. She was a quiet, well-informed woman, who had seen much of the world and talked well, but she had made an unhappy marriage, and the sunshine had gone out of her life and dulled the once ardent spirit.

'You have been very kind to my brother,' she said to Glyn, who had seated himself by her side. 'It is so good of you. How fortunate it was you were with them when it happened!'

'I am only too glad that I was able to be

of any assistance,' said Glyn. 'It was a grievous affair altogether.'

Mrs. Harrington was near-sighted, and had the usual trick of half closing her eyes and peering out between the lashes so as to focus any object she wished to examine minutely. She peered out at this moment at her brother, who was seated with Sibyl near one of the windows.

'Who is that light-haired girl my brother is talking to, Mr. Beverley?'

'Miss Maitland—Miss Venables' cousin.'

'Oh yes, I remember. She was quite a child when I was here last. What a delicate-looking creature! It was she who was with you when the accident took place, was it not?'

'Yes.'

'And increased the complications by fainting. It was fortunate for you that Blanche was more strong-minded.'

'Yes, indeed.'

'Blanche was always very calm in emergencies—even as a girl. Her mother was a great invalid for many years before she

died. Blanche's devotion to her was quite beautiful.'

'I can easily believe it.'

'And there can be no better discipline than attendance on the sick, painful though it is. It teaches one to be calm even under the most trying circumstances, and it is the severest lesson in patience. They tell me you are painting Miss Venables.'

'Yes, that is why I am here.'

'I shall be most curious to see the picture; she is such a favourite of mine.'

Meanwhile, D'Eyncourt and Sibyl were conversing near the window.

'I cannot tell you how glad I am to see you down again,' the girl said in an undertone. 'I had a summons from home, but I could not go until I had seen you.'

'Take care,' answered D'Eyncourt; 'there are so many eyes upon us. Why did you send the roses?'

Sibyl dropped her eyelids.

'I thought you would like to have them,' she said.

'So I did, but it was imprudent. People

are so ready to suspect. I suppose no one but Beverley knew you sent them?'

'No; that is——' The girl stopped abruptly.

'That is what?' asked D'Eyncourt, with some anxiety.

'Mr. Beverley unfortunately gave me your message when Blanche was present.'

'Message? What message?'

'That you thanked me for the flowers.'

'I sent no message—oh yes, by the way, I was obliged to say something of the kind. He would have thought me a Goth else. But was Blanche present when he gave it?'

'Yes.'

The Captain's brow darkened.

'And she heard what he said?' he asked.

'Of course. It was while she was sitting.'

There was a pause. Then Sibyl spoke in a still lower tone, and with her eyes still on the ground.

'I am very sorry indeed if it annoys you.'

'Did Blanche make any remark?' D'Eyncourt asked, without noticing her regrets.

'I think she did. She said something about my taking to early rambles again. She

thought nothing of it, I assure you.' Then, after a pause: 'How I wish you would end this! I cannot tell you what I suffer.'

'Hush!' the Captain said nervously. 'It is not safe to talk of this here. Talk about something else.'

'My brother and his companion seem to be having a very confidential chat,' said Mrs. Harrington, peering out through her eyelashes again.

Glyn thought she was approaching dangerous ground, and got away as soon as he could. Blanche was going towards the piano, and Glyn stepped forward and opened it for her.

'What was that song Miss Maitland mentioned about the nightingale singing on as if in pain, Miss Venables?'

'Don't you know it? One of Alice Mary Smith's.'

'I wish you would sing it. Oh, I forgot, though. I am afraid I mustn't ask you.'

'Do you really wish it very much?'

'I do indeed, if it would not be asking too much.'

Blanche searched for the song.

'You are a favoured mortal, Mr. Beverley,' said the Vicar's wife, who was close by. 'What song is it, Miss Venables?' she asked.

'"If thou wilt remember, or if thou wilt forget,"' answered Blanche. 'Christina Rossetti's words,' she added, seating herself at the piano, and running through the prelude.

'Blanche is actually going to sing!' exclaimed Sibyl, in amazement, as she watched the proceedings at the piano.

The next moment Miss Venables' voice was thrilling through the room with an intensity of sweetness and pathos impossible to describe. The Vicar's wife had not exaggerated in the praise she had bestowed on her friend's singing when Glyn was at the Vicarage.

'I shall never cease to feel grateful to you for that song,' he said, as Blanche rose from the piano.

'It is very sweet, is it not?' she answered. 'It is one of my especial favourites, but intensely mournful.'

'"Our sweetest songs are those which tell of saddest thoughts,"' quoted Glyn.

'I must get Sibyl to sing,' said Blanche, as she crossed the room to where her cousin and D'Eyncourt were still sitting.

But Glyn was not in the humour to hear anything after that song. He strolled towards the open window.

'Come and have a weed,' said Forbes, passing his arm through Glyn's. 'You are good at billiards, ain't you? We shall get the table all to ourselves now, and I want to have a talk with you, don't you know.'

CHAPTER XI.

FORBES'S PROPOSITION.

'THE question is,' said Forbes, as soon as he had broken the balls, and had fairly settled to the game and his cigar, 'how long shall you be about that picture?'

'It is rather hard to say at present,' answered Glyn. 'It depends to a certain extent on the frequency of the sittings.'

'But you get them every day.'

'I have hitherto.'

'What an awfully lucky fellow you are! By Jove! I wish I could paint. Fancy having Blanche Venables in front of you for two mortal hours, with the privilege of staring at her as much as you like! By Jove!'

The picture even in imagination seemed

too much for Forbes's equanimity. He sighed and missed an easy hazard.

'Don't you think her awfully pretty?' he asked.

'Yes, I do, most decidedly,' answered Glyn. 'I don't think there can be two opinions about it. I wonder she's never married.'

'Oh! She's young yet,' pursued Forbes. 'Besides, I don't suppose she's quite got over that affair yet, don't you know.'

Mrs. Byng's words rushed into Glyn's mind. He paused in his stroke, dropping the butt of his cue on the ground.

'What affair?' he asked.

Forbes jerked his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the drawing-room.

'Why, that affair with him—D'Eyncourt, don't you know.'

'No, I don't. I never heard anything about it. Do you mean that Miss Venables was engaged to Captain D'Eyncourt, or what?'

'Well, yes. She was engaged to him, of course. Everybody knew that. But nobody knew why she threw him over.'

'Threw him over ?'

'Well, something very like it ; the engagement was broken off, any way, and everybody understood that it was Blanche's doing. D'Eyncourt never came near the place till about a fortnight ago.'

Glyn took up his cue again, but his thoughts were anywhere but on the game.

'This is all new to me,' he said.

'Ah, yes, I forgot. You've only known them the last few days. But, I say, you get on with them first-rate. Blanche seems to have taken you under her special umbrella.'

Glyn laughed.

'I should be very glad to think so,' he said.

'And I tell you what,' continued Forbes. 'It's deuced few people she does take under her umbrella, I can tell you. I'd give—by Jove ! I don't know what I wouldn't give if she'd take me under it.'

Forbes took out his handkerchief and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. The room was hot, and his feelings were strongly excited for so portly a young man

—one, moreover, who was not usually given to sentiment.

'But I'm sure she's very fond of you,' said Glyn.

'Do you think so? I wish I could. I always fancy she thinks me a most awful muff, don't you know. You fellows can talk to her about things she likes: pictures, poetry, music, all that sort of thing. D'Eyncourt, too—he's so deuced clever at everything that a fellow has no chance, don't you know.'

'I don't think Miss Venables looks to cleverness alone,' Glyn answered.

'I don't think she does. If she did, I suspect she'd have married D'Eyncourt. But I'll bet you what you like she'll never marry a fool.'

Glyn began to suspect that his corpulent companion was more deeply touched than he had yet confessed. There was something comical, too, in the notion of so portly a frame being associated with any romance in connection with the delicate girl who had made so deep an impression on himself.

Indeed, he could hardly keep from laughing, although his thoughts were still running on that engagement with D'Eyncourt.

'But why did you want to know about the sittings?' he asked at length.

'Well, that's just what I want to talk to you about. I've got my vessel, the *Mayfly*, fitting out at Southampton, and I want to get Sir Percy and Blanche to come for a cruise down westward. If you'll come too, it would be awfully jolly, and we might take Sib Maitland, if she cared to go. There's lot's of room in the yacht. She's built more for comfort than speed, don't you know.'

Glyn thought this highly necessary, considering the size of the owner.

'It's very good of you to invite me. I should like it immensely,' he said. 'What shall you do about Mrs. Byng?' he added.

'Oh, I don't much care to have her,' said Forbes.

'You don't? I thought you were the greatest friends.'

'So we are when we meet. But she leads me rather a life, don't you know. Enough's

as good as a feast of that sort of thing. Besides, we shall be quite full without her, especially if Sib Maitland goes. I know Blanche will like to have you. You get on with her better than any fellow I have seen for a long time.'

A keen sensation of delight passed through Glyn's heart as he heard these words. He had not even yet begun to count the cost of those delicious hours—this absolute sunshine of the present. And, indeed, what would the love of youth be if it were clouded everlastingly by the shade of caution?

Glyn could not help being struck with the unselfishness of Forbes. Most men would have shrunk from the idea of inviting a man whom they knew to be a favourite of their lady-love; but Forbes was so entirely single-hearted, and had so humble an opinion of himself, that it never occurred to him for a moment to become an aspirant for the hand of Miss Venables, or even to endeavour to win from her a warmer feeling than friendship. He was quite content to sit and worship from afar, and to administer to the

girl's pleasure in every way in his power. Glyn felt, also, that he himself was a favourite with this good-natured young man, and that the invitation arose as much from a feeling of personal regard as from a desire to please Miss Venables. But for this, his pride, perhaps, might have taken alarm.

He went on thinking. Here, then, was the explanation of Mrs. Byng's words, 'Not so pretty as she was before——' Had there been something in the breaking off of that engagement which had caused Blanche so much pain as to change her very appearance, possibly to alter her character? She was more staid and serious in manner, as a general rule, than most girls of her age; but this Glyn had attributed to her responsibilities. Now he began to think it might arise from another source: that she had been very fond of this man—perhaps was still.

The last thought sent a sudden sharp pain through him, so that he missed an easy stroke, and called forth an exclamation from Forbes, which brought him to his senses.

'Well, now, what do you say? How

many weeks shall you be over the picture?' asked Forbes.

'Two or three at least,' Glyn answered, giving himself a wide margin. 'I don't finish the picture here, however; I take it to town with me.'

'You think you *might* manage to start in a fortnight?'

'I might.'

'Then, I'll talk to them about it. Sir Percy is fond of the water, and we shall be a very jolly party, don't you know.'

'Shall you invite D'Eyncourt?' asked Glyn, with ill-concealed anxiety.

'Not if I know it!' said Forbes, with one of his favourite winks. 'Between you and I'—Forbes set grammar at defiance now and then—'I don't like him. Do you?'

'I can't say I do overmuch. Though we have been thrown a good deal together in consequence of this accident, and we get on very well.'

'Yes; you see, you are the sort of fellow that would get on with most people. You've got tact, or whatever they call it. Now, if I

hate a man I hate him, and if I like a man I like him, don't you know. Your play!'

Glyn was getting abstracted again. This projected trip was opening a new delight to him, and D'Eyncourt, concerning whom he began to have an uncomfortable feeling, would not be with them. In the small compass of a yacht, Blanche and himself would be thrown into the closest companionship hour after hour, day after day. The thought was too entrancing. Alas for poor Glyn! He was getting deeper and deeper into the wood, and had not even begun to consider the way out again.

CHAPTER XII.

SIB'S SECRET.

THE next fortnight glided away all too quickly for Glyn. The picture grew apace. Visitors came and went. The days increased in warmth. Summer put on her mantle of sober green—the most unlovely time for foliage in all the leafy season. July was passing, and Forbes was growing more impatient every day.

'There is no reason why you should not return with us for a few days after our trip in the yacht, Mr. Beverley,' Blanche said one morning as the sitting was drawing to a close. 'In fact,' she added, 'I think that would be much the best arrangement. You could then take all your things with you

direct to London. Dear me! it will seem quite strange when there are no more sittings. I believe I shall really miss them.'

Glyn's heart was too full for words. He went on with his work without making any response. The truth is, in the last week or two he had begun to realize the insanity of having allowed his feelings to become so involved. His enthusiastic admiration of Blanche Venables had ripened to an absolute passion, and when once passion obtains the mastery, the will becomes a slave.

These long, delicious morning hours had been too delightful to Glyn, and any reference to the time when all this must be given up, and he must return to his old life, was like a sudden shock. It is true the yachting trip to which he had looked forward with such delight yet intervened between the present and the time of his departure, but even that was but the beginning of the end, and was no longer anticipated with unalloyed pleasure.

Mrs. Courtenay Byng had defeated Forbes's arrangements, after all. Sibyl had

been ordered home, to enable the exacting Lucy to pay a visit to London. She obtained an extension of leave until the sittings were over, as she was always Blanche's companion on those occasions; but she could not go in the yacht—indeed, she did not much care for the trip, and confessed as much to Blanche, who told Mrs. Byng.

'But, my dear Blanche,' said the widow, 'you cannot possibly go alone! You *must* have a companion with you. You must get Mr. Forbes to ask me.'

'You had better order him to take you,' said Blanche, laughing.

But there was a point at which even Forbes drew the line, and Mrs. Byng knew it, so she insisted that Blanche should make the request; and of course the request was granted without a word, and Mrs. Byng was most cordially invited. She was not supposed to know that the invitation came by Blanche's request, so her pride was not offended. Indeed, Mrs. Byng was not one to allow even pride to stand in the way when it interfered with her desires.

D'Eyncourt was better again—in fact, almost well, except that his arm was still in a sling. He passed most of the day on the terrace, reading the papers and smoking cigarettes. The sittings were a nuisance to D'Eyncourt. He was a man who liked to be in the thick of everything, to make himself the centre of attraction, and to see people —especially the fair sex—bow down and worship, not only his beauty, but his cleverness. To be shut out from the painting-room and the society of two of the three women who were now at Lupton—for his sister and the other guests had departed—was a species of banishment which galled him, although it did last for only two hours in the morning.

Several people had seen the picture, which was now fairly advanced, and all spoke highly of its merit. Glyn had represented his sitter in the light morning dress in which he had first seen her. She was leaning forward, with her hand thrown easily across her knees, and with her hat hanging carelessly from the hand, as if she had just come

in from a stroll. It was certainly a charming picture, the best Glyn had done, they said. D'Eyncourt, who was supposed to be a great authority in these matters, was loudest of all in its praise, and thereby won a slice of gratitude from Blanche, who was most anxious, for the artist's sake, that the picture should be a success. It might be ungrateful of Glyn, but he mistrusted D'Eyncourt's praise. There was a suspicion of a motive about it, he thought.

The truth is, Forbes's information with regard to Blanche's engagement still rankled in his breast, and caused him many uncomfortable thoughts. He had asked Forbes whether Blanche had appeared very fond of D'Eyncourt, and that young gentleman's reply had troubled him sorely.

'I don't think I ever saw a girl so completely over head and ears in love,' Forbes had said. 'I used to keep out of their way always; not to play gooseberry, don't you know.'

'Breaking it off must have been a hard trial to her,' answered Glyn.

'Awfully hard, I should say. That was the reason they went abroad, I fancy.'

But, after all, what right had Glyn to feel hurt that this girl had loved so deeply? He had no definite hope of winning her himself, the thought was insanity; but, then, we have all of us been more or less insane in love affairs at some time or other. Possibly some vague hope, a hope that had not yet shaped itself even to his thoughts, flitted across his mind now and then in connection with the future, but he scarcely dared to dwell on it. And then this renewed intercourse between the parted lovers, and their intimacy. What might it not lead to? Considering all things, therefore, Glyn was very glad indeed that the Captain was not to be one of the yachting-party.

'Where can Sibyl be?' said Blanche, as she took her place for the last sitting on the day previous to their departure. 'She has never failed us before.'

'I think I saw her with her hat on, crossing the terrace just now. She looked as if she were going for a walk.'

Blanche seemed annoyed. She did not like this notion of sitting alone; but she was on very intimate terms with Glyn now, and to have hesitated would have appeared foolish. So Glyn went on with his work.

Meanwhile Miss Sibyl had fairly stolen away. If her cousin could have seen her at this moment, it is doubtful if she would have continued sitting with such equanimity, for in a shady nook of the wood, not half a mile from the house, Sibyl and D'Eyncourt were seated on the grass, screened by close, overhanging branches and clumps of blushing dog-rose, and tapering spires of the foxglove, and huge ferns, and all the wealth and beauty of the summer woods.

'I could not go without seeing you once alone, George, though I think Blanche will be awfully angry with me for deserting her,' said the girl, looking fondly up into D'Eyncourt's face.

'Never mind for this once. I dare say she will be quite happy with her artist friend. Come on this side, Sib, nearest my heart.'

The girl moved obediently round to the

other side. He still claimed the privileges of an invalid, for his right arm was in a sling. He passed his uninjured one round her waist and drew her towards him.

'Do you really mean that, George?' she asked.

The words had passed from his recollection already.

'Mean what?' he said.

'That I am nearest your heart.'

'Mean it! of course. Why should you doubt me?'

'I don't know,' she answered, dropping her eyes to the long grass, where a glossy green beetle in its onward path was struggling with the slender blades; 'I have been filled with all sorts of sad thoughts lately. I don't think you appreciate the position in which you place me, or what I have to endure.'

'You know I can't help myself.'

'I try to think so; but it seems to me that any sacrifice would be better than this, and —and that you would think so, if you really loved me.'

'Doubting me again!' D'Eyncourt said

half angrily, as he allowed the pressure of his arm to relax. 'I wonder when you will learn to believe in me.'

'Oh, George!' she answered, turning suddenly, and laying her face on his shoulder, as she looked up into his eyes. 'You know in my heart of hearts I do believe in you. To doubt you really would break my heart. But it is such a hard trial to undergo—all this concealment and deceit.'

'Is it so very hard to endure it for my sake?' he asked in a softer tone.

'Yes, even for your sake. It is so against my nature. It seems to have changed my very life. Even Blanche, sweet as she is, looks upon me at times with suspicion; and —I am so wretchedly unhappy!' she said, with a sudden burst of feeling.

'But why need you be? It is only for a short time.'

'How can you be sure of that?'

'Well, in the natural course of things. You know well enough, if my uncle had the least suspicion that I intended to marry a girl without a penny, I should never see a brass

farthing of eight thousand a year. You know, moreover, that he especially wishes me to marry Blanche.'

Sibyl drew herself away with a sudden motion.

'I wish we had never, never met!' she said.

Her lips were quivering with suppressed feeling. She clasped her hands in front of her, and sat gazing into the depths of the flowery wood.

'How can you say that, Sib? It is unfair to yourself—to me.'

She went on, without heeding his words:

'George, I don't know what would happen if ever you married Blanche.'

'But I never shall marry Blanche.'

'Are you quite sure?'

'Quite sure.'

She went on dreamingly still:

'What a happy girl I was before I met you at the Fortescues'! I don't think I had a care, and deceit was a thing unknown to me. Oh! why did you come between me and such a peaceful girlhood?'

'Why were you so attractive, Sib?'

She turned upon him suddenly.

'Sometimes I have thought that if I had been cleverer, had had more experience of life, more to say, less shyness, and all that, you would not have cared about me—would not have valued what you are pleased to call my sweet face. Is this so?'

'It was the simplicity and purity of the little flower that first attracted me, I admit. But I found there was more in it than I at first anticipated, and more capability of loving, at all events.'

'And you had won so many before,' she went on musingly. 'I know it now—Blanche among the rest. Women of the world, surrounded by luxuries and pleasures of all kinds; women to whom love comes as a mere pastime. You found me an easier conquest; for, to me, love is all in all, and I have nothing else to turn to. You might have left me in peace.'

She leaned forward, resting her cheek upon her hand, still gazing into the shade of the wood with an increasing look of pain. He

took her other hand in his. She did not withdraw it, but it did not change her look.

'But this little flower attracted me more than all the rest,' he said.

'But will it always do so?'

'Always.'

'You think so now, perhaps, but the idea haunts me that by-and-by may come a time when I shall be cast aside like the others—all except Blanche, perhaps.'

He made a movement of impatience.

'Always harping on the same string,' he said. 'Sib, it is awfully unkind of you.'

'Is it?' she answered quietly.

D'Eyncourt was skilled in the workings of the female heart. He had graduated in the school of flirtation. He had made women unhappy for life merely for the pleasure of the passing time—for the mere excitement of conquest. He passed his arm once more round the girl's waist, and drew her towards him.

'It is too bad of you to be so cross and sceptical, considering my crippled condition, Sib.'

In an instant she had turned to him with a look of tenderness in her eyes, and clung to him as if to entreat forgiveness. Then their lips met, and for the moment all her doubts were banished. At length she drew herself away, but D'Eyncourt saw that he had gained his point.

'Oh, George!' she exclaimed in an almost despairing voice, 'I cannot resist your love, do what I will. It would break my heart to give you up.'

'Have you thought of doing so, Sib?'

'I don't know what I have thought. I have felt almost out of my senses at times, when some doubt of you has crossed my mind; I feel that there is so little in me, so very little to attract a man like you. Sometimes when I see you beside women so much more attractive than I can ever be, I cannot believe it possible that I have really won your love. It is little wonder if doubts sometimes cross my mind.'

'Try and banish them now, at all events. We must part to-morrow, perhaps for a long time. Don't let us mar the happiness of this

last day by any disagreeable thoughts or words.'

'If you would only let me tell Blanche.'

'Not for the world!' exclaimed D'Eyncourt in sudden alarm. 'In the first place, it would be a very bad compliment to her to think that I had so soon consoled myself; and, in the next place, the secret once out of your own keeping, you don't know what might happen.'

The girl sighed again, but she was utterly without the power of resistance in the presence of this man. He wound his arms about her once more, and in the intoxication of the moment all fears and doubtings again vanished. Yet when D'Eyncourt saw how love possessed her, soul and body, he almost shrank from the thought of the passion he had invoked, and dreaded to think what might happen if this girl ever saw him as he really was.

An hour later Sibyl entered the painting-room, looking radiantly happy, and with a flush on her usually pale cheeks.

'Why have you deserted us this morn-

ing, Sib?' asked Blanche, who was still sitting.

'The morning was so lovely, I could not resist it,' answered Sib.

'But you might at least have told us you were going,' persisted Blanche, with the least tone of annoyance.

'I did not intend to be so long away,' said Sib meekly, as she turned to put down her hat.

'You would like a walk yourself, Miss Venables,' said Glyn, putting aside his palette. 'I can stop now. The sunshine certainly is tempting. I don't wonder that Miss Maitland could not resist it.'

Sib turned on him a look of gratitude, and no more was said on the subject of her defection.

Miss Venables had unintentionally done Mrs. Courtenay Byng an injustice in saying she had fled at the first intimation of a catastrophe. She had suggested to Sir Percy, before Blanche returned, that she might perhaps be of use in connection with the injured man; but Sir Percy had not encouraged the

idea, and as she had another visit to pay in the neighbourhood, she thought it would be wiser to depart, at least for a few days ; but she had returned in ample time for the yachting trip.

And so it came about that on one lovely morning, when the sky was bright above, and a fresh breeze was ruffling the leaves of the beeches, they all departed for Southampton, where they found the *Mayfly* with her huge mainsail already hoisted and her anchor apeak ; and before sundown they were running, with the wind abeam, down past the Needles, which lay bathed in the evening sunset, while the yacht's stem pointed towards a glory of golden light, which seemed to Glyn to symbolize the very acme of human happiness.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT THE LAND'S END.

'HAUL up the tack of the mainsail, Gibbs, and get the foresail off her. We'll bring up a little further on.'

Like all ardent yachtsmen, Forbes liked, whenever practicable, to steer his vessel himself. He kept a steady hand on the tiller as the *Mayfly*, with a breeze from the nor'-west, stood well into Mount's Bay. Penzance was before them, glittering in the beams of the morning sun, for they had run down from Falmouth during the night, and all the party were now gathered on deck to watch the marvellous beauty of the scene around.

The view was indeed lovely. Old St. Michael's Mount, with its stern rocks and

hoary castle, rose grandly up to the right. In front were the quays and houses of Penzance, backed by the woods of Madron, and the purple hill of Castle an Dinas. To the left lay the quaint old town of Newlyn (the School of Newlyn yet unthought of), its strand alive with a busy multitude who were landing large quantities of hake from the fishing-boats, which lay with their brown sails fluttering in the breeze just off the quay. Behind Newlyn a steep slope of meadowland rose up to the gray tower of St. Paul, which stood out in clear relief against the exquisite filigree of cloud in the western sky.

'Hard down, sir,' said Gibbs, the veteran sailing-master. 'We'll bring her up here. We're quite close enough in.'

Forbes jammed the tiller hard down. The yacht rounded gracefully up into the wind, the anchor flashed into the sea. The vessel forged ahead a little until she felt the strain of the cable, and then, with a fluttering main-sail, fell back and lay like a bird at rest on the placid waters of the bay.

'By Jove! it is a lovely place,' said Forbes,

joining the group, who were gazing over the quarter at the beauties of the shore. I've seen it half a dozen times, but every time I see it I like it better, don't you know.'

'It seems to me, judging from pictures, that it must be more like Italy than any part of the English coast,' said Glyn.

'And I can answer for it the sea is as blue as the Mediterranean,' said Blanche.

'And I think we shall enjoy it more when we have had breakfast,' said Sir Percy.

'In which sentiment I quite coincide,' said Mrs. Byng.

'We have no time to lose, either,' Forbes continued. We must get a long day at the Land's End. Send a boat ashore, Gibbs, and order a waggonette to be ready in an hour. I don't much like the look of that mackerel sky,' he added. 'We shall have wind by-and-by. After all, though, it's better to have a bit of a tumble to see the Land's End to advantage, don't you know.'

A start at the appointed time brought them to the First and Last Inn before noon, and then they entered upon that wild tract, the

like of which is not to be seen elsewhere on all the weather-beaten Western coast.

First a few straggling cottages built of huge masses of granite strong enough to defy even the Atlantic gales. Beyond these a wide uncultivated tract of short grass and gray boulders, interspersed with patches of hardy ferns and stunted heather. The hoar lichens of a thousand years lay on these boulders, whitening them as if with age. Beyond the brink, where the plain dropped suddenly to the sea, lay a vast expanse of blue heaving water, its surface flecked by 'white horses,' which, driven by the increasing gale, swept grandly on towards the savage rocks of the Land's End itself. A mile or two from the shore the Longships Lighthouse reared itself aloft amid a circle of white foam, and far away on the dim horizon the faint forms of the Scilly Isles lay like specks of gray cloud. Overhead the sky spread broad and blue, with here and there a few masses of cloud-wrack scudding hurriedly across the clear expanse, like heralds of the coming gale.

Glyn was in a seventh heaven of delight. He had never before looked on such a scene as this. He tempted Blanche out to the furthest promontory, the veritable Land's End, and there, behind a sheltering rock, they sat watching the 'hell of waters' below, with that keen relish which is intensified by close artistic observation. The stiff breeze had increased to half a gale, and the waves, as clear and bright as emeralds, came rushing in with a deafening roar upon the rocks beneath.

Forbes distinctly declined any participation in the rock-climbing, and Mrs. Byng did not seem in the humour for it at present. Sir Percy sat in quiet enjoyment of his cigar at the window of the hotel. It had come to be such a recognised thing for Glyn and Blanche to be together in these excursions that nobody thought of interfering. Not that Mrs. Byng approved, only she did not see her way to altering the arrangement so long as Sir Percy did not object. The Baronet, like most parents, was blind to any danger which might arise from the close intercourse of the

two young people, and never gave the subject a thought.

For all that, there was danger even to Blanche. Glyn was for ever by her side, anticipating her every wish, ministering to every want, and in a thousand little ways, such as love only can prompt, adding to the pleasure of her existence. Woman-like, she received these attentions as a matter of course, without pausing to analyze the feelings which prompted them. Glyn strewed her pathway with flowers. Why he did so, or how that pathway would look without the flowers, she had not yet paused to consider.

'I am so delighted that Mr. Forbes thought of this trip,' she said. 'I never enjoyed anything so much. I think you are enjoying it, too.'

'Enjoying it!' Glyn exclaimed. Then he stopped abruptly. Some words were on his lips which he would have probably regretted. Blanche looked at him in surprise. He ended tamely: 'I should have little sense of the beautiful if I did not enjoy this. There

is always something to damp the purest pleasures, though,' he added, after a pause. 'I am haunted now by the idea of all this coming to an end.'

'But you may look forward to a renewal of it some day or other—perhaps next year. Who knows? And then there will be the pleasant anticipation.'

'I would rather the reality were prolonged,' quoth Glyn. 'I should like time to stand still now. I shall never be happier than at this moment. It is not pleasant to anticipate gloomier days.'

'But why anticipate them? Be satisfied with the present, and make the most of it. For my part, I was never in better spirits in my life.'

'It is certainly too bad to indulge in gloomy anticipations on such a glorious day,' said Glyn, rising, and leaning over a huge mass of granite to gaze down into the depths beneath. 'What a plunge this would be! Straight down into those mad waters—a sheer descent of granite, without a ledge or crevice for at least two hundred feet.'

'Pray don't stretch over too far!' said Blanche, a little nervously. 'Had we not better go back to the others?'

'Ah!' sighed Glyn, turning suddenly to his companion, 'that's just the one thing that troubles me—going back. We have had three weeks of this happiness, three weeks of perpetual sunshine; we have reached the culminating point, the Ultima Thule, and so we must go back. In another week or so I shall be leaving you, and on my way to London alone.'

'You forget! It was arranged you were to stay with us for a time to give the finishing touches to the picture.'

'No, I had not forgotten that.'

'And,' continued Blanche, 'I have another project in store. You confided in me so far as to tell me your life had been a hard struggle. Will you forgive my asking if this is the reason you have never been to Rome?'

'I don't mind telling *you* that it is,' said Glyn frankly.

'Well, then, will you let me smooth away that difficulty? I know my father admires

your landscape very much. At a word from me he would purchase it. Could you not, in that case, treat yourself to a trip to Rome next winter? We shall be there.'

With any other person in the world Glyn's pride would have risen straight up on end. He could not feel this with Blanche. Besides, the last four words would, in any case, have conquered him. To be able to carry out the dream of his life, and to do it in the company of this fair girl, who was dearer to him than all the world—the thought was Elysium.

'I do believe you are my good angel!' he exclaimed fervently.

Blanche laughed.

'Oh no, I am not—only your very good friend,' she said. 'I am sure you deserve far more for all your kindness and attention to me. And that prompts me to say what I have had in my mind for some time. You always speak as if you were the only person who has derived any pleasure or benefit from our intercourse; this is hardly fair to yourself.'

'But I cannot understand how it is possible

that you have benefited in any way,' said modest Glyn.

'You cannot? but I assure you I have. It is not only the pleasure you have given me in seeing and watching your work, but it has been a kind of awakening of art instincts within me. You know, from our many conversations, that I have always felt a keen interest in the lives of the old painters and in their finest works, but I knew next to nothing of the art of to-day—of the methods and aims of living artists. Of course it is contemporary art which should interest us most. You have given me a new interest in life.'

'You make me very happy by saying so,' Glyn answered.

'Somehow,' Blanche went on, 'the people with whom I have been associated all my life—people of education, too—know very little, and feel very little, about art. The thought of the vast amount of pleasure and profit to be derived from it never seems to cross their minds. With the men it is all horses and dogs; with the women, balls and gossip. There has always been an inner

craving with me for something better, something higher. You have shown me what it meant. I don't mean in painting only, though it has been a great pleasure to learn something of the practice of art, and the thoughts and aspirations of artists; but it has been the same in other things.'

Glyn was listening in a seventh heaven of delight.

'What other things?' he asked.

'Why, think of the various subjects we have discussed during the sittings; think of the delightful readings. Oh, I can assure you, you have amply repaid me for any little service I may have done you. It is I who am the debtor.'

'I cannot believe that; but it is a greater happiness than I can express, to think that I have been the means of awakening any new sources of happiness in you. If I have imparted any new ideas, you must remember that it was the receptiveness of your nature which prompted me. With most people I should have kept them shut up in my own breast.'

'Well, then, we will agree that we have been useful to each other. That is a very pleasant thought. But, in addition to all this interchange of thought, think how much we owe you for your help at the time of the accident. I am afraid Captain D'Eyncourt is not half sufficiently grateful for all you did for him.'

'Pray say no more about that,' answered Glyn. 'I merely did what any other man with a spark of feeling would have done.'

'Well, we will not argue about it,' said Blanche.

'How glorious all this is!' she suddenly exclaimed, looking over the vast stretch of sea to where the white foam curled around the rocks upon which stood the Longships Lighthouse. 'Fancy being shut up amid the chimneys of London at such a time as this, as so many people are—from choice!'

She broke into a silvery laugh at the bare idea of such a thing. Evidently she was very happy. Glyn noted this with a secret satisfaction which was new to him.

'I have more than once been wondering

how it was that I found you spending the summer at home instead of in London,' he said. 'Do you despise a season in town?'

'I had two or three of them after I was presented, but I could not stand them any longer. The utter weariness of it was unendurable, and my father is always only too anxious to get away. It passes my comprehension how women can go on, day after day, night after night, thinking of nothing but balls and receptions, to which they go chiefly to see and be seen. It is bad enough with the young, but to see the old dressed to death and trying to look young, going the same round day after day, hardly able, some of them, to drag one foot after another—it is simply horrible!'

'Use is second nature, I suppose,' said Glyn.

'Oh, they have no souls above it. They have been brought up to it, and they continue in the same groove. But, good heavens! what a mission for a woman. Happily, some break away nowadays and settle down to useful work for the good of

their fellow-creatures. After all, I suppose it is a matter of education. They do as their mothers did before them, and their grandmothers before that. But don't let us talk of it ; it seems desecration even to think of such things in the midst of all this loveliness. And all this time we're forgetting the Roman project. I suppose I may consider it settled, then, and you will go.'

'You don't know how happy you have made me,' said Glyn. 'Instead of looking forward to a dreaded winter, it seems as if a new life were opening to me.'

'Are you two ever coming back?' shouted Forbes, from what in relation to the promontory they were on might be considered the mainland.

'Our host is becoming impatient,' said Blanche laughingly. 'I think we had better go.'

She put her hand into Glyn's confidingly, and they climbed together over the granite rocks and up the grassy slope, on which the sun lay bright and warm.

Glyn left his companion with Forbes and

the widow, and wandered off by himself to take in the full delight of this new arrangement. How strange it is! Half a dozen words may change the current of one's whole life. Glyn had no more gloomy thoughts that day. His heart was as light as the clouds which scudded across the summer sky overhead. To Rome! and with her! The thought was too delicious; and yet it was a happiness which seemed absolutely within his grasp.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WIDOW'S FREAK.

GLYN did not retrace his steps for half an hour, and Forbes availed himself of the opportunity thus afforded to pass a few coveted moments with Blanche, though, with his usual unselfishness and modesty, he was thinking all the time that he was boring her, and that she would far rather be with Glyn or some more congenial companion. The widow had also disappeared soon after Glyn's departure. They thought she had returned to Sir Percy.

'I declare there is Mrs. Byng getting down the rocks with Mr. Beverley,' Blanche exclaimed, as she and Forbes wended their way back to the hotel, after a short ramble towards Sennen Cove.

'By Jove! so she is,' answered Forbes in amazement. 'Doosid odd, you know! She vowed that nothing would induce her to go out to the furthest point where you and Beverley were. She's awfully inconsistent. They'll both break their necks if they get down there.'

Indeed the place had a perilous look. Immediately in front of the hotel the magnificent granite rocks dropped abruptly to the sea some three hundred feet below. These masses, all square and gray and rugged, were piled one upon another like a gigantic staircase fit for the Cyclopes of old. Glyn had taken it into his head to scramble down these rocks so as to get as near the roar of waters below as the nature of the coast would permit. Much to his amazement, just as he was swinging himself from the highest ledge the widow's voice reached his ear.

'Mr. Beverley, will you take me with you?'

Glyn looked up.

'Why, Mrs. Byng,' he said, 'I had no notion you were near. You don't mean to

say you wish to go down these rocks? I thought you were horribly nervous.'

'Oh yes, with Mr. Forbes, naturally! He is so unwieldy and awkward. I'm not a bit afraid, really. At least, not with you!'

The *empressement* thrown into the last words was not lost on Glyn, but it failed in its effect. He was not as a rule ungallant, but on this occasion he certainly felt that the solitary scramble he had anticipated would be spoiled by having to look after the somewhat helpless widow. He tried to dissuade her from going.

'The rocks are very steep, Mrs. Byng. See, I have to let myself down six or seven feet at the first go off. You will never be able to manage it.'

'Yes; but here is a better way to the left —quite an easy slope of grass. Oh, I must go! I am not in the least afraid; and this air is so exhilarating it makes one feel capable of anything.'

'Come along, then,' said Glyn, who saw that opposition was useless. 'Let us see what you can do.'

Beyond all doubt, he ought to have admired the little woman's pluck. Very few of us at Glyn's age would object to a scramble among rocks with a pretty widow; but somehow Glyn had become impatient of any woman's society but Blanche's, and he would far rather have gone down the rocks alone. He could not, however, deny the practicability of the route pointed out by Mrs. Byng, so he took her hand and prepared for the descent.

Blanche and Forbes were too far off to remonstrate with the widow, so they sat down and watched the adventurous pair with some anxiety.

The slope was easy enough at first, and there were only two or three rocks in the path, involving a jump of not more than a foot or two to a lower level; but presently the way grew steeper, the grass more slippery, and the descent over rocks more precipitous. Moreover, there were certain corners to be turned, where you looked down the entire depths to the waters below—spots where even stout nerves might confess to being

disturbed without the imputation of cowardice.

'Really, I think you had better let me take you back,' said Glyn, as they stood at the edge of a perpendicular rock, from which there was a drop of some five or six feet to the one below. 'There is hardly a foothold between this and the next, and a slip might be perilous.'

'I shall go on, Mr. Beverley, whether you help me or not!' said the determined little widow. 'I have made up my mind to get down to that ledge yonder, close to the sea, and when I have once made up my mind nothing turns me.'

At this moment, the voice of Forbes was heard from the heights above.

'Beverley, Beverley, don't go any lower! You'll get into an awful mess, don't you know.'

'We're all right so far,' shouted Glyn in reply. 'I am trying to persuade Mrs. Byng to come back.'

'And Mrs. Byng will do nothing of the kind,' said the widow quietly, and thereupon she sud-

denly sprang down to a lower ledge before Glyn could anticipate her, or offer any help.

He was annoyed at her obstinacy.

'You will really get into difficulties if you don't mind,' he said; but the widow only laughed the louder.

What possessed the woman? Glyn had never before seen her so flushed and excited. He felt that all his energies would be taxed to keep her from getting into real danger.

They had to turn an angle of rock which hid them from the view of anyone on the heights above. It occurred to Glyn that Blanche would be in a great state of anxiety about her friend, and he said so.

'Oh no! She is quite accustomed to my eccentricities,' said the widow. 'Besides, she knows I am in good hands.'

'But you are not in my hands!' remonstrated Glyn. 'If you will go on, I decline the responsibility.'

'Then I will go on my own,' cried the widow, laughing again. 'See, it is as easy as possible. If you don't come on, I shall positively think you are afraid.'

Glyn found it useless to protest. The only thing, therefore, was to make the best of it. He had already concluded that his companion's little nervous fits were sheer affectation. When it suited her, she had no lack of pluck and energy.

'At least, let me go first, Mrs. Byng. You may sprain your ankle in one of those jumps, if you won't accept help.'

Mrs. Byng had no objection to this arrangement. The situation was decidedly romantic. Their progress downward obliged the little widow to put herself in various positions, which displayed her well-rounded figure to the utmost advantage. She was quite conscious of the fact, and did not in the least object to it.

In spite of himself, Glyn could not help admiring her pluck and perseverance. She gave him very little trouble even in the most difficult places.

Presently they reached the lowest attainable point—a huge platform of rock, some fifty feet above the swirling waves. They could hardly draw breath, for the strong salt

wind came in fierce gusts over the edge of the rock, and struck them in the face as with a hand. Sometimes a swirl of water dashed over the rock itself, up almost to their feet.

'You will be quite soaked with the spray!' shouted Glyn. 'Had we not better go back?'

The din of the great rushing waves was so great that Mrs. Byng was obliged to shout her reply.

'No! This is grand. Let us stay a few minutes; but give me your arm.'

She clung close to him, with a tenacity which amused him after her recent independence. The unusual exertion had brought a rich glow of colour to her cheeks, her face was wet with the spray, her hair blown about in 'most admired disorder.' In truth she was very pretty. Glyn was forced to admit this, in spite of his admiration of Blanche.

A huge wave, leaping upward to their very feet, warned them to retreat. Glyn glanced upward at their route, and then for the first time realized the difficulty of returning. The

bold, bare rocks, denuded even of lichens at this point, rose up like the bastions of a mighty fortress sheer from base to summit. The crannies and ledges which had helped their descent were invisible from the effects of foreshortening. There really seemed no practicable route. The widow's eye followed Glyn's glance, and then, to his horror, he saw her turn quite white.

'I cannot go back,' she said faintly.

Her nerve seemed suddenly to desert her. Glyn was seriously alarmed, but he put a good face on the matter.

'Oh yes, you can,' he said. 'It is not half as difficult as it looks. Not a quarter as difficult as it was coming down.'

'But I didn't realize it then. It looks perfectly frightful!' was the answer, which struck Glyn with fresh dismay.

'Let us begin at once,' he said. 'It must be done.'

Not a word did the widow say. She allowed herself to be led passively to the sort of miniature *cheminée* by which they had reached the lowest point.

'Now, if you will lay hold of my hand, I will pull you up,' said Glyn.

She placed her hand in his. Glyn planted himself firmly on the slope of rock, holding the widow with his left hand and steadying himself with the right. Then he managed to scramble up, dragging his companion after him.

They were over the first difficulty and on a safe ledge, but suddenly Glyn felt his companion's hold relax, and the next moment she sank down on the ledge, utterly helpless.

'Mrs. Byng, for Heaven's sake do not give way!' cried Glyn. 'Just one effort; we shall soon be over the difficult part!'

But there was no answer.

Seriously alarmed, Glyn knelt down beside her and lifted her head on to his arm.

Then her eyes opened, and she looked up into his.

She seemed in no way disconcerted. The colour had come back to her cheek, and her lips were a little parted, showing a row of very perfect pearls within.

The faint looked uncommonly like an artifice.

It was a trying moment for Glyn, as it would have been to any man, for evidently the widow was very much in love with him, and he was by no means prepared to be made love to whether he liked it or not.

CHAPTER XV.

AT ST. MICHAEL'S MOUNT.

A QUARTER of an hour later Glyn and the widow reappeared near the top of the cliffs.

Forbes met them at the foot of the grass slope in front of the hotel.

'By Jove!' he exclaimed. 'I'm awfully glad to see you! Miss Venables has been in a pretty way about you!'

'All's well that end's well,' said Glyn, giving his hand to the widow to help her up the last bit of rock. 'We have had a stiffish climb, I admit.'

The widow looked strangely agitated. As Forbes hastened back to tell Blanche they were safe, she drew close to Glyn, and said hurriedly:

'You will never betray me, Mr. Beverley? Promise me that?'

'You cannot suppose me capable of such meanness, Mrs. Byng,' he answered coldly.

'I do not,' she said. 'I believe you are an exception to the rule. I know how apt men are to malign us when they get together. After all, it was my own weakness that brought it on me, and I quite deserve to suffer.'

The widow put on a look of affected penitence which was intended to elicit sympathy, but it was lost on Glyn, who was staring straight up the slope to where Blanche stood.

'I think we had better say no more about it,' he answered quietly, and the next moment they rejoined their friends.

The notion of going back lost half its terrors under the changed circumstances. The proposed trip to Rome was a thing to look forward to, and this thought kept Glyn from falling into those fits of despondency which will at times fasten upon all æsthetical natures. Besides, might he not, with the advantages that were now opening to him, eventually

win a name which might justify his even aspiring to the hand of the woman he loved? The thought thrilled him. He was fired with an ambition which burned like new life within him. Fresh projects floated through his mind like inspirations. He would work, work, work, as he had never worked before, to show mankind what prodigies of art can spring from fervent love. Dreams! dreams! Who has not indulged in them? but how often are they realized? How Fate steps in with her unrelenting fingers and quietly puts aside our most cherished plans, while we can only stand helplessly by and see our house of cards, built with such anxious fingers, lying in hopeless ruin on the ground!

They were to leave Penzance on their return trip the next morning, but this time Nature stepped in, and there was no gainsaying her edict. It began to blow from the south-west during the night, rain and wind came up in fierce gusts and beat the windows of the hotel, where they were located, with a force which threatened to drive in the panes. The sky had cleared somewhat in the morn-

ing, the wind had shifted a point or two, but blew more fiercely than ever, and the sea was a mass of white, raging foam for half a mile outward from the beach. The yacht had taken shelter in the harbour, or she must inevitably have gone to pieces on the rocks during the night. Not a sail was visible in the offing, but here and there a Newlyn fishing-boat with close-reefed lug-sail might be seen struggling onward towards the harbour; the weather being too wild for the anchorage under Newlyn heights.

'What fun it would be to walk to St. Michael's Mount in this storm! Who will volunteer?' said Blanche as they watched the wild waste of waters from the hotel window.

'Why, you would simply be blown away,' said Mrs. Byng.

'You couldn't stand up against the gale, don't you know,' said Forbes.

'Pack of nonsense! Going out in such weather as this!' said Sir Percy.

'Wherefore, papa?' rejoined Blanche archly. 'It's not raining a bit, and who cares for a

little wind? Mr. Beverley, you are the only one who seems to approve of the notion. Will you be my escort?'

Of course it ended, as it usually did, by Blanche and Glyn starting off. Forbes went with them as far as the quay to see how the *Mayfly* was getting on; for the boats were jostling each other somewhat roughly even in the sheltered harbour. Here he said good-bye to them and wished them luck.

Blanche, wrapped in her waterproof, battled manfully with the wind, which threatened at times to lift her bodily from the sands. Glyn helped her as much as he could by walking to windward, and now and then, in rougher parts of the way, by giving her a hand. But Blanche was plucky and persevering beyond the ordinary range of womankind, and Glyn thought he had never seen her look so pretty as she did on this particular occasion, with the wind taking most unwarrantable liberties with her hair, and twisting her wraps about her so tightly at times that it almost chained her steps, and involved dexterous turns and twists to enable her to free herself from the folds.

But, then, Glyn thought each new aspect under which he saw her was the prettiest, and who can blame him, seeing how deeply he was in love?

'It would have been a thousand pities to have gone back without seeing the Mount,' said Blanche, as they paused a moment for breath under a friendly sand-bank.

'I quite agree with you,' Glyn answered. 'I am much mistaken if we do not find it the most interesting part of our trip. Any way, it recalls one's youthful days. It was the home of Giant Cormoran, you know.'

'Yes, but the story says he used to wade over to the mainland. He might have saved himself the trouble, for there appears to be a very substantial causeway connecting the Mount with the shore.'

'Luckily for us there is, but it is only dry at low-water. At high-tide all that is covered. Cormoran must have been too impatient to wait for the tides and preferred a wetting. I wonder where the pit was that Jack dug for him. It is an odd sensation to find one's self actually in a spot so closely associated with

the romance of childhood. In those far-off days St. Michael's Mount seemed to me to belong almost to another world.'

'And the idea of visiting it would have seemed a fairy dream.'

'Precisely; but I am inclined to think it will be a sort of fairy dream even now. Do look at those steep slopes of velvet turf on the landward side, and the cold gray rocks, standing out like huge bastions to seaward, and that crumbling old castle perched on the summit. What a wild, weather-beaten look it has!'

They were crossing the rocky causeway now, and the old Mount, so pregnant with memories of the past, was right before them. Soon the harbour and the compact little hamlet at the foot of the Mount were reached, and, passing through the narrow gateway in the wall, Glyn and his companion stood at length upon the slopes of the Mount itself.

The weather had brightened wonderfully. The storm had swept the clouds from the sapphire floor of heaven, and a vault of pure,

bright blue spread broad above. Only a few torn clouds sped rapidly across the sky, like stragglers from an army hastening to come up with the main body. The shadows from these stragglers flitted rapidly over the Mount, with an alternating play of light and shade which added a new charm to its manifold beauties. Castle and rock and velvet turf sank into shadow or stood out in bold relief as rapidly as the changes of a kaleidoscope.

'Here is the old causeway leading up to the castle,' said Glyn; 'rugged and rocky and steep as it was in the days of Ptolemy, when the enterprising merchants of those days used to come hither for tin, and introduced the luxury of clotted cream to the Cornishmen of old.'

'Do you mean Devonshire cream?'

'Yes, but it is high treason, I am told, to call it Devonshire cream in Cornwall. The Cornish folks had it from the Phœnicians.'

'Is that really true?'

'So tradition says, but I won't be responsible for all tradition says. I believe, however, it is a fact that cream is prepared in

the same way in the East. How infinitely obliged I do feel to the present proprietor for not turning this rugged old pathway into a smooth gravel walk, as they would have done near London. One can almost picture to one's self the old monks of Edward the Confessor's time toiling up and down these very stones, or the armoured knight of a later day, with drooping plume and lance in rest, guiding his steed up to that rare old portal yonder. What a wonderful place it is! It carries one clean out of the present, and brings back all the chivalry and romance of five hundred years ago.'

They were up at the grassy platform now, immediately below the entrance to the tower. Above them the lichened walls rose hoar and gray; beneath, the rocks fell sheer down to the sea, some two hundred feet below. The gale had subsided to a stiff breeze, which still swept the heaving, shimmering sea into windy furrows, and sent fierce showers of salt spray high up the enormous masses of granite that form the western boundaries of the Mount.

'The Land's End was not better than this,' said Glyn. 'What a glorious day it has turned out! I think it is the most enchanting spot I was ever in.'

And then he thought it was the very happiest day he had ever known, for what happiness could be greater to an enthusiastic mind than to stand upon such a spot in such sweet companionship? Enthusiasm got the better of discretion. He spoke again, this time with more fervour.

'How can I ever repay you for all the pleasure you have given me? What a blank the future will seem without you!'

The instant the words had passed his lips he felt that he had committed a fatal error. Blanche was leaning out over the low battlemented wall, with her head partly turned from him. She gave a slight start as the words were uttered, and turned suddenly, so as to hide her face from him. There was a constrained silence for a moment or two, during which the monotonous thunder-crashes of the waves on the rocks below seemed to come up with appalling distinctness.

Then suddenly, and as if Glyn's words had not reached her, Blanche spoke:

'Let us go up to the castle itself. We have a good deal to see yet, and the time is passing quickly.'

The tone was so unconstrained that for a moment Glyn thought it possible his unlucky speech had not been heard. He fervently prayed that it might be so, though it was hardly conceivable. At any rate, there was no change in his companion's manner, and when their eyes next met, hers at least were as calm as usual.

So together they wandered on through the old castle, and looked at the ancient armour, and the Black Jack, and the old tables and chairs in the banqueting-hall, which said chairs had borne the weight of successive guests at that goodly board 'for full five hundred years.' Then they went down into the dungeon below the chapel, and up the narrow stairway of the tower to the storm-beaten battlements; and then Glyn (not without a somewhat faltering 'Take care' from his companion) wriggled himself into

St. Michael's chair, and sat with his legs dangling over the giddy depths of rock and sea below.

And the day increased in sunshine, and the wind died out, and a great calm fell upon the face of Nature, broken only by the long heave of the waves and the dull thunder of the surf. And later, when they had again descended to the shore, and Glyn had, to some extent, forgotten his incautious speech, a happiness filled his heart—born of the bright day and the wondrous beauty of the scene—such as he had never known before in all this novel and delightful intercourse. And Blanche seemed happy too, for, whether she had heard his words or not, by no word or sign did she convey to her companion the least notion of anger or annoyance. And so, like all fairest dreams, the hours slipped by, never to return, and that bright morning came to an end.

I dare say we have all experienced the fact that the blackest misery too often follows on our brightest joys. Is it the compensating balance of fate, that must either maintain a

dull mean or leap at once from the extreme of joy to the extreme of woe? At times we are disposed to think the uneventful dead level of life the best. Glyn had certainly reason to think so when they returned to the hotel. The first thing that met his gaze as they crossed the hall was a telegram addressed to himself. Wondering much what unusual event had caused it to be sent to him here, he opened it mistrustfully, and read the following from the doctor who attended his mother:

'You are wanted in town at once. Painful events have occurred. Your mother is seriously ill.'

CHAPTER XVI.

RUIN.

Underwood, Bagshot, and Co. had gone all to smash.

To put it in a few words, that was the news that greeted Glyn on his arrival in town. The news was appalling enough, for his mother's small fortune had gone with them.

In an evil moment, like too many other confiding mortals, she had been induced to place the whole of her money, of which she had entire control, in the hands of this renowned firm. The idea of any risk was the last thing that troubled her. Underwood, Bagshot, and Co. were as safe as the Bank of England. To breathe a doubt

of their stability was tantamount to high treason. A man would have been deemed a raving maniac to have hinted at such a thing, and in proportion to the confidence of the public was the widespread ruin and desolation which followed their fall.

It is no wonder Mrs. Beverley was seriously ill. Her ruin was so complete that she had literally nothing to look forward to in the future. She was too old and too enfeebled to work. She had always been delicate, and this shock had completely robbed her of the small amount of energy she had before enjoyed. She knew the difficulty that women have in finding any respectable employment, so she had little hope of any help from her daughter. Glyn, therefore, was her only resource; and the thought of being a burden on him at the outset of his career troubled her sorely. But this was all she had to look to.

'Never mind, mother,' he said, as he sat by her bedside the evening of his arrival in town. 'Worse things than this have happened, and we must strive to make the

best of it. You mustn't let it weigh you down, for that will not mend matters.'

His own heart sank, nevertheless, although he would not let it be seen. The blow to him was sudden and severe. The change from the brightness of the last few weeks—from the heaven of sunshine in which he had lived and moved and had his being—to this home-life in gloomy London was in itself bad enough, but the sudden and fatal stroke of fortune which had prostrated his mother made it additionally hard to bear.

And yet in some mysterious way this very calamity became in one sense a relief, for the consideration of ways and means for the future kept him from dwelling too constantly on the thought of his separation from Blanche. He must sink all thought of self, at least for the present. Others were dependent on him now. He did not flinch from the thought, but he knew that, labour as he might, it must needs be a long time before he could hope to surmount the difficulties that were suddenly thrown in his path.

Of course the trip to Rome must be given

up. This was one of the first thoughts that occurred to him when, after the meeting with his mother and sister, he set himself seriously to consider their arrangements for the future. The money which would have paid for his trip was the only thing they had to rely upon for the present, and there was a long winter before them, with no resources except the precarious income which might accrue from Glyn's comparatively unknown artistic skill. This was a poor prospect indeed, for we all know how hard is the struggle which the votaries of art have to undergo, be they painters, musicians, actors, or poets, until they grasp the topmost rungs of the ladder of fame. Then, indeed, Fortune lavishes her gifts with too profuse a hand, and surfeits her favourites with success; but how few, how very few, possess the requisite strength of mind and body to carry them triumphant through the mêlée; how many sink when victory is just at hand!

The more the affairs of Underwood, Bagshot, and Co. were gone into, the more hopeless they appeared. Indeed as Glyn wisely

concluded, it was better to dismiss the matter from their thoughts altogether ; for if a hope were indulged in one week, it was sure to be dispelled the next.

'We'll think no more about the wretched concern, mother,' he said. 'If anything should come from the wreck in the future, all well and good ; but for the present it is better to make up our minds to rely on ourselves alone. Thank God, I have got a fair start now, and some kind friends ; and perhaps commissions will come tumbling in much faster than we anticipate.'

The little house at Brompton was given up, and lodgings were found near Glyn's studio, which was in the old-fashioned district of Bloomsbury. Blanche Venables had, of course, been informed of the catastrophe, and the consequent impossibility of Glyn's trip to Rome. She had written a most kind and sympathetic letter. She regretted much that they would not have Glyn with them in Rome, but hoped for that pleasure another time. 'My father will be delighted to take your landscape,' she went on to say ; 'indeed, he

tells me he never intended to part with it; so you must remember that it is purchased quite independently of any idea of your going to Rome with us, though I must confess I am very, very sorry for your disappointment. You must, however, look on the bright side of things. With your talent, you are sure to succeed, and rely upon it that both my father and myself will always take the greatest interest in your welfare. We shall pass through London on our way, and shall, of course, see you, as we must come and inspect my picture.

'Pray tell Mrs. Beverley how very sincerely I sympathize with her in her great trouble. How shameful it is of these people to bring ruin on thousands in this way! I hope so much to hear better accounts of her health. I shall look forward with the greatest pleasure to seeing her and your sister when we come to town.'

This letter was a great relief to Glyn. The sale of his landscape helped him through the dreary weeks of early winter. The lengthening days of the new year found him still hope-

fully at work, still touching on his portrait of Blanche, and filling up his time with a few pot-boilers which an enterprising dealer took off his hands at a price calculated by the risk of investing in the works of a comparatively unknown artist.

CHAPTER XVII.

GLYN PUTS ASIDE HIS PALETTE.

'The Venables come to town to-morrow, Kate,' said Glyn, handing his sister a letter, as they sat at the breakfast-table.

There was no mistaking the joyousness of his tone as he made the announcement. After all the anxiety he had undergone, after all the dreary November days, the thought was like a breath of summer to him.

His sister looked at him anxiously. She knew his secret. They had no secrets from each other, but she felt the hopelessness of his love, and trembled for the result.

Her own experience of life had not been of a kind to make her take an optimistic view of existence. When still quite young, she had

loved with all the strength of her young heart a man in every way worthy of her—one whose position and prospects, moreover, were such as to give them every reason to anticipate a happy future. On the very eve of their marriage he was struck down by a fatal disease, which carried him off in a few hours, and Kate Beverley was a changed woman. The light had gone out of her life. From the brightness of girlhood she changed suddenly to the sadness of mature years. She bore the stroke bravely, but from that time she had never known a joyous moment. Why such bitter strokes of fate are inflicted on some while others, apparently less worthy, escape, it is hard to say. It is one of those things which remain to be 'unriddled by-and-by.'

'How delighted I shall be to see her again!' said Glyn. 'I can finish the picture too. Fancy if it should be hung on the line! I do believe it will make a sensation. The papers will notice it. They generally take the pictures on the line first. By Jove! my fortune would be made.'

'It is a lovely picture, Glyn; but I would not be so confident, dear. If you build your hopes on it too much, think how dreadful the disappointment will be if it is not well hung.'

'Oh, hang it, Kate! I don't wish to be conceited, but they must hang that well.'

He would not entertain the thought for a moment that his peerless Blanche should be 'skyed.' Even supposing the picture to be deficient in artistic skill, the loveliness of the face would preserve it from such a fate. On this point he could not be despondent.

The few days that the Venables were in town flitted by all too rapidly for Glyn. Blanche gave him two or three sittings, and the finishing touches were put to the face the day before their departure for Italy. The thought of their going without him was a bitter trial to Glyn, but, apart from his narrow means, there were circumstances connected with his mother's affairs which prevented his leaving town. Indeed, he could not have had the heart to leave her in her present state, even if he had had the money.

'When I come back I shall find you quite famous,' Blanche said, as the last sitting was drawing to a close.

Kate, who usually did propriety during the sittings, had been called from the room, and Glyn and his sitter were alone.

'I can hardly hope that,' he answered. 'But, at any rate, I shall have to thank you for any credit it may bring me.'

'I do not admit that. It is your own talent which will have brought about the happy result. If I had not sat, someone else would, and the end would have been achieved without my intervention.'

Glyn burned to say that no other face could have looked so lovely on canvas, but he knew his sitter hated flattery, so he was silent.

'You will of course let us know your fate at the Academy,' Blanche went on. 'I will send you our address in Rome, and you must write.'

'But you will be home long before that time, will you not?'

'We may not be. It is probable my

father may wish to stay abroad for some months.'

Glyn's countenance fell.

'Of course I will write,' he said. 'It is very good of you to take such a warm interest in my success. Do you really go to-morrow?'

Blanche's head drooped a little, and there was a slight heightening of colour as she announced:

'Yes—to-morrow evening.'

Glyn was silent. In spite of his hopefulness, his heart was heavy at this parting. When last they parted, he had been buoyed up by the thought of the trip to Rome. Now all was changed. She was to go to-morrow. When would they meet again? Perhaps not for months. The thought was terrible to him.

In spite of all his efforts, when next he spoke his voice faltered.

'Then, I shall not see you again after—after to-day?'

His sitter's head sank lower and lower. He was conscious of it, although he could

hardly trust himself to look towards her. A sudden hope darted through his mind—a hope so bright, so entrancing, that it sent a thrill through all his frame. His hand shook so that he could hardly hold the brush. He put down his palette.

'I think that will do, Miss Venables,' he said.

He strove in vain to control his voice. His lips almost refused to shape the words.

There was no response from his sitter. He looked round in surprise. A great change had come over her, a change that was quite startling to Glyn, who had always thought her so self-possessed. Her whole frame seemed to droop. Her elbow rested on the arm of the chair, and her hand was pressed tightly against her cheek, which was deadly pale. Her eyes were gazing intently before her, with a look in them of indescribable pain.

The next moment conventionalities were cast aside, and Glyn was leaning over her with quickened breath.

'Miss Venables—Blanche—tell me quickly!

Dare I hope it is the thought of this parting that—that——'

He stopped abruptly. If he should be mistaken! That thought came upon him like a chill, and stopped his utterance.

'Oh, do not speak to me!' she said. 'It is folly—madness! How can I be so weak!'

Her head sank back upon the cushions of the chair. Her eyes were closed, but the lids were quivering with suppressed emotion.

Glyn could bear it no longer. He sank on his knee beside her chair, and took her hand in his. She did not attempt to withdraw it, and he went on in broken words:

'It is too late now to recall my words, even if I could,' he said. 'I cannot let you go without telling you how intensely dear you are to me. You have been my very life for the last few months. No words can describe the happiness you have given me. To lose you is like losing my life!'

'Oh, hush! Do not speak to me so! I cannot bear it!' she answered. 'Mr. Beverley, this must not be. You do not know the unhappiness it would cause. Oh,

forgive me if I have given you pain! I have been very weak and foolish. I ought to have foreseen and guarded against this; but I could not bear the thought that all the happiness I have felt in the last few months was slipping away from me, never to return. If—if what you say is true, I have done you a cruel wrong.'

She spoke through her tears, and Glyn could see by the quivering of her lips how severe was the struggle she was undergoing. This, and the thought of his own misery, was more than he could bear.

'Blanche, for Heaven's sake do not let me feel that I have made you unhappy. You, for whom I would sacrifice my life! I never dreamed that I should say such words to you. I never dreamed that you would care one jot for me. I dare not hope, I know—the very thought, in my present poverty, would be an insult to you.'

'Oh, no, no!' she broke in. 'It is not that. You do yourself an injustice. It is my father. You do not know his thoughts and hopes with regard to me. Oh, do not

make me weaker than I am already! This *must* not be. We can be friends always. You will never have a more devoted one. You will believe that, I know. Now I trust you to help me to be myself again.'

She put out her hand to him frankly, confidingly. It was a terrible moment to him. The tumult in his heart seemed to beat down reason itself. He turned hastily away, and strode across the room. Blanche's eyes followed him with a look of piteous entreaty.

'You are not angry with me!' she said.

Glyn was by her side in a moment.

'Angry with you? No. It is this struggle with myself which is so hard to bear. Oh, forgive my folly! If you only knew the strength of my love for you, you would not wonder.'

'I do know it. I have seen it almost from the first. I ought not to have encouraged it. But it was so precious to me that I had no strength to resist it. Oh, Glyn, Glyn, what shall I do without you?'

The words came like a cry of despair, and

the next moment he was holding her closely to his heart. For a few minutes there was silence. Then, with a long sigh, she drew herself away.

'Let me go now,' she said. 'This cannot be good for either of us. Will you ever forgive me for the suffering I have caused you? Will you believe that the pain of parting is very hard to me as well?'

'I will believe it. It will be too precious a remembrance, and, in spite of all, it will leave me hope. May God bless and keep you always!'

Ten minutes later she was gone, and Glyn sat alone in his studio, his face buried in his hands.

But, in spite of the bitter parting, a vague sensation of delight was in his heart — a delight such as he had never known before through all his past and present struggles. The thought that he possessed this girl's love came to him like a glimpse of heaven.

But he saw the difficulties in his way — saw that in his present position it would be madness even to hope. Her words told him,

too, that, apart from his narrow means, there was some other obstacle. She had trusted to his honour, and he resolved never to betray that trust. Never again until he could win fame and fortune should another word of love pass his lips. But he would wear the thought of her love like a talisman in his breast, to lead him upwards to fame and fortune.

Dreams! dreams! How often indulged in, how seldom realized! And yet, what would youth be without them?

CHAPTER XVIII.

REJECTION.

'The President and Council of the Royal Academy regret that they are unable to accept Mr. Beverley's picture, No. 1, and request that it may be sent for with as little delay as possible.'

That was the fatal announcement which Glyn sat gazing at with dazed and bewildered eyes. There was no mistake about it. The fiat had gone forth, the bolt had fallen, and that neatly printed circular emanating from Burlington House had crushed at once the hope which had sustained him through the long winter months—through all the cares and anxieties caused by his mother's reverses, through all the bitterness of his parting with Blanche.

There are moments in life when evil circumstances seem to combine to drive out every ray of hope from the heart—when, turn where we may, there is no break in the dismal clouds that hang dark and threatening around; when the very elements seem to combine to increase our gloom and depression. Such a day was this to Glyn. The very aspect of the street in which he lived, the dull uniformity of the houses of smoke-tsained brick, the lowering fog which hung upon the roofs, weighed upon his oppressed spirit as they had never done through all the hopeful winter days. The incessant, dreadful rattle of the cabs seemed to strike upon his very brain. He knew not where to turn for refuge, so he sat with his head clasped between his hands, as if striving by their pressure to hold Reason in her place. What a contrast to that bright morning at Lupton, when the bees were humming about the roses outside his bedroom window, and all the bright world seemed fresh from the hand of God! 'Would such days ever come again? Never, never!'

It was the depression of disappointment acting on his sensitive temperament which spoke within him. Then his thoughts took another turn, and a flood of burning indignation poured forth, against the Council, against the Academy as a body.

'Such a rascally injustice! My picture of last year could not be named in the same day. It makes one sick to think of it.'

He forgot his delight when his former picture was accepted. He forgot that the Council had some ten thousand pictures to deal with, and only space for a few hundreds. He abused the men when he should have abused the system.

A soft hand stole round his neck, a loving kiss was imprinted on his forehead, and his sister's eyes looked consolation into his own. The fatal letter lay on the breakfast-table. She understood its contents at a glance.

'Don't take it so to heart, Glyn.'

That was all she said. She knew it was no good to reason in the midst of the present bitterness. She felt, too, bitterly enough, that there were worse evils in the world than

being turned out of the Academy, but she would not obtrude her own grief at such a time as this.

'What on earth can we say to the mother?' asked Glyn at length. 'It will half kill her.'

This was the best turn his thoughts could take—consideration for others. It would lift him out of himself.

'She will not be down to-day. She is not well,' said Kate. 'Let us keep it from her for a day or two. Perhaps something may happen to cheer her up before we need tell her.'

'I don't see what can happen. Everything is as black as can well be; all the life is knocked out of me. Things can't be worse.'

'Then, whatever happens will be a change for the better. Come, Glyn, don't give up hope. Try and take some breakfast.'

Her own food, which she forced herself to swallow, almost choked her, nevertheless; but she was determined to appear cheerful, if only for her brother's sake.

'What a fearful disappointment it will be to *her*, too!' said Glyn as he sat staring at his

untasted coffee. 'I dread to write to her, but I must. All my hopes completely scattered,' he added, sinking back again in utter despair.

Suddenly sitting up again, he said, 'I wonder why she has not answered my last letter, telling her about my private view and the sending in. I made sure she would write and wish me success. Perhaps she is ill.'

'Don't worry yourself with that idea, Glyn. Many things may have happened to prevent her writing at once.'

'But she always answers so quickly. At least, she did the last time I wrote.'

By-and-by, in the afternoon, the clouds lifted, and a glint of sickly London sunshine struggled into the little parlour. Glyn was too heart-sick to enter his studio that day.

'I think I will take a turn out,' he said. 'A stretch in the country may do me good.'

He was beginning to revive already. Even the sunshine of a city had a revivifying effect on a nature like his, so quickly responsive to outward influences.

He took a turn round by Hampstead, but

there is not much in the way of consolation to be got out of the suburbs of London ; at least, not for those who have tasted the vast delights of a majestic mountain slope, or the exhilaration of blue waves in sunshine. Dreams of that giant Cornish coast came back to him, with the white foam-lips kissing the solemn, silent cliffs, and the sea-bird soaring above the slopes of thyme and heather that seemed to meet and touch the sapphire sky. He longed to be away, away : far from the scene of his disappointment ; far from paints and palettes, the thought of which sickened him in his present mood. Far from the corner taverns, the Cockney twang, the paper-strewn hollows of the renowned suburban heath.

Then he sat down on a bench hacked all over with names and initials in true Cockney fashion. He looked southward over miles of houses, for southward ever his thoughts tended now, and he let his soul wander away over sea and land to that far-off city whose history is the history of the world. Its river, its ancient ruins, its majestic dome,

its treasures of art, rose before him as he had seen them in pictures, and as he had fondly hoped only so recently to have seen them in reality. He pictured Blanche in the midst of it all, and wondered on what relic of the past or on what treasure of art she might now be gazing. Oh that he had the wings of a dove, that he might fly thither, and share with her the intoxicating delight he would feel in the contemplation of those wonders of the past!

A sickening sense of something wrong in the nature of things came over him when he reflected on the thousands of fools, with ample time and means to witness all these things, and to whom they meant nothing beyond their outward aspect; while he, with a soul alive to the keenest impulses of nature and art, was utterly debarred from participation in them by misfortune and grinding poverty.

'God help me! everything is as black as black can be. I may as well go home. I don't think my walk has done me much good after all.'

With that he turned his steps homeward.

But, for all that, his walk had done him good. It had sent oxygen into his lungs, purified his blood, braced up his nerves, and made him fitter—though he was himself unconscious of it—for the battle of life that was still before him. For darker troubles were yet to come, although he had thought things at the worst.

When he reached home late in the evening, he found his sister waiting for him at the tea-table.

'There is a note for you, Glyn,' she said, pointing to a small missive on the table. 'It is in a lady's hand. I hope it brings good news.'

Glyn opened it somewhat listlessly. It was as follows:

'Bruton Street, W.,
'April 18th.

'My dear Mr. Beverley,

'I have only been back from Italy for a week or two, or I should have written earlier, to ask you to be so kind as to undertake a portrait of my unworthy self. If you think you can make anything of me, will you kindly

call and arrange about it? I am at home every evening, and shall be very pleased indeed to see you.

'Believe me,

'Yours very sincerely,

'LAURA BYNG.'

In spite of himself, Glyn's face brightened as he handed the note to his sister. It was a new commission, at any rate, and would help to keep the wolf from the door while he still struggled up the stony pathway that leads to fame.

'This will help us to break the news to the mother,' he said.

END OF VOL. I.

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